

LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

THE RIGHT OF TRANSLATION

[IN RESERVED.]

No. 507.—VOL. XX.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING JANUARY 18, 1873.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[THE LIVING MYSTERY.]

MAURICE DURANT.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Gold! yellow, glittering, precious gold!

What need we should have any friends if we should never have any need of them?

Next day two topics were flying about the county and filling the gossip-mongers with goods, the engagement of Lord Crownbrilliant and Miss Lawley and the daring attempt at burglary at the Cottage which that lady had so bravely prevented.

These two events and the grand fête at the Folly set the whole district in a ferment; nothing else was talked about, and before the evening had closed in Lady Mildred's drawing-room was full of distinguished visitors, who had come to kill two birds with one stone—learn the full and latest particulars of the dramatic scene with the burglar and congratulate Miss Lawley upon her conquest.

Lord Crownbrilliant had very nearly fainted when Carlotta, in calm tones, had given him a concise account of the affair, and wanted to rush off to town and offer an enormous reward for the capture of the man; but Carlotta not only begged him to refrain from any attempts to capture Cribby Bill but actually refused to give a description of his appearance.

"What is this about Carlotta Lawley's engagement, Chudleigh?" asked Sir Fielding as Chudleigh entered the library with a letter in his hand.

"Who told you, sir?" replied Chudleigh, Scotch fashion, by asking another question.

"Maud," replied Sir Fielding. "She has just come back from the Cottage, and is filled with some story of a burglary, or attempt at it; that occurred there last night, and Carlotta's engagement with Lord Crownbrilliant."

"I suppose it is true then, sir," said Chudleigh, turning to the window till his face had regained something of its usual colour.

"I am delighted to know that it is," said Sir

Fielding. "It is a splendid match for her—splendid. Lord Crownbrilliant is just the husband for such a regal creature as Carlotta Lawley, to say nothing of the title and the broad estates. She will look well in her coronet."

"I came to disturb you with this letter," said Chudleigh, not able to bear more, and he laid it on the table. "It is a notice from the solicitors. Two weeks only remain."

Sir Fielding shrank back into his chair. "Two weeks!" he repeated. "Longer than that, Chud, surely. Two weeks! What is to be done?"

Chudleigh shook his head.

"I am at a loss, sir," he said. "We can scarcely

hope to raise the money, and, if not, the Hall—"

Sir Fielding held up his white hand tremblingly.

"Don't say it, Chud. Bad enough to know it, to

think of it, without giving it tongue."

Chudleigh sighed, and there followed a minute's

silence, Sir Fielding shrinking into his chair with his

hand before his eyes.

Presently, with a suddenness that startled Chud-

leigh, he said:

"Chud, I'll try the Folly."

Chudleigh started and crimsoned.

"There is no other course?" he added, though in-

terrogatively.

"I know of none," said Chudleigh.

"Then I will go," said Sir Fielding, nerving him-

self to a fit of energy, and rising from his chair.

"At once, sir?" said Chudleigh, with the inward

longing to postpone the trial he knew it would be

for his father.

"Ay, at once, Chud, at once," replied Sir Fielding,

brokenly. "Delsys are dangerous. It is the last

moment, or nearly so; besides, Chud, it will cost me

as much to do it a week hence as it does now."

"Let me go with you, sir," said Chudleigh.

"No, no," replied Sir Fielding, though reluctantly.

"I'll go alone. I don't think I could bear you to

hear me asking him."

He rang the bell for William, his valet.

Chudleigh, when Sir Fielding had left the room,

sank into the straight-backed chair beside the win-

dow, and stared moodily across the park.

Strange! the blow had fallen very lightly upon him; his poverty did not seem so bitter now. He forgot or did not know that despair deadens the heart and numbs the senses.

Meanwhile, Sir Fielding, with bent head and heavy hand upon his carved stick, was walking across the park, on his way to ask for a loan from the cotton spinner whose existence a few months back he had refused to recognize.

"He will think," he murmured, "that I have accepted his friendship as a lead up to this. Ah! what would I do—what would I not suffer to have the golden years back again! I might have worked this money out of the estate. Might! might! What is the use of might? My opportunities have been spent and lost amongst the dry records of the past. Books bring comfort, they say; they have brought ruin to me. At least, but for them I might have staved it off, and still handed down the Hall as a heritage to my children," and thinking thus the old aristocrat bowed his head still lower to hide the tears that fell upon his white-frilled shirt.

He had reached the corner of the road that branched off to the Rectory, and, with the intention of cutting his way short by going through the Rectory Wood, had opened the gate, when the owner, followed by Tigris, the dog, strode from amongst the trees and swung it back for him.

"Ah! good-morning!" said Sir Fielding, lifting his

hat, at which the other completely bowed his head.

"I am caught trespassing."

"Not trespassing, but conferring an honour," re-

plied Maurice Durant, bending with his kingly bow.

"The Rectory and its grounds are at your disposal,

Sir Fielding."

"You are too generous," said Sir Fielding, passing

through the gate and leaving his arm against the post,

for he was rather tired.

"Not more so than yourself," retorted Maurice

Durant, with a grave smile. "It is not once only

that you have placed the Hall at my disposal."

Sir Fielding winced.
"What I feared I meant," he said, sadly; then, moved by an uncontrollable impulse, he added, "It will not be in my power, perhaps, to continue my offer long."

At the words and the sad tone the stalwart figure started the slightest in the world, and his heavy brows lowered searchingly, as, fixing his eyes upon the pale, gentle face, he said, the foreign accent very palpable: "What mean you?"

Sir Fielding looked up into the noble face, and answered bitterly, after a moment's hesitation:

"I don't know why I should not tell you, Mr. Durant. I should have told your father in the years gone by. Where do you think I am going now?"

Maurice Durant, whose frown had grown darker at Sir Fielding's mention of his father, raised his brows with a shrug of his stalwart shoulders.

"I am going to the Folly," said Sir Fielding, raising his head, "to beg a loan of Mr. Gregson, wherewith to pay off a mortgage on the Hall which forecloses in a fortnight's time."

Slowly, with sad, bitter distinctness, the words fell brokenly from the thin, quivering lips, and at their close the blue eyes were filled with tears.

There was a minute's pause. When Sir Fielding looked up again he saw a light in the dark eyes gleaming down at him that he had never seen there before, a light he would not have thought the stern, fierce eyes capable of possessing.

"To the Folly?" said the grand voice, lowered to a pitch of gentleness that corresponded with the gaze, and equally surprised Sir Fielding. "To the Folly! Why walk so far, Sir Fielding? The Rectory is much nearer."

"The Rectory!" murmured Sir Fielding.

"Ay, the Rectory," repeated Maurice Durant. "You spoke of my father just now; he would have considered it not far from an insult to pass his house in search of a favour; what cause have you to deem me more gracious? Why should Sir Fielding be too proud to take aid from those whom he has helped in the past?"

And his dark eyes flashed now almost angrily.

Sir Fielding stared bewildered.

Could it be possible that this strange being really considered his neglecting to ask him for the loan an insult?

"Or did you think the Durant coffers had been emptied by their spendthrift owner, Maurice? If so you were wrong, Sir Fielding; there is gold in them still—idle gold that could find no better use and purpose than to relieve, however slightly, the wants of Chichester Hall."

As the noble words rang out like the pealing of a grand organ Sir Fielding almost lost their force in the feeling of admiring awe that filled him; for the form raised to its great height, and the glorious tanned head with its flowing hair, seemed rather that of some heroic mediæval king, than a rector of the nineteenth century.

For a moment he was speechless, then he stammered:

"I—I thought you were perhaps unable."

"I forgive you; say no more," said Maurice Durant, holding out his hand. "Though I will not say I could have done so had you reached the Folly, come, Sir Fielding, let us walk to my den—it is indeed a den—and get this trivial business settled."

"Trivial!" repeated Sir Chichester, shaking his head. "The amount—"

"Is not over half a million of pounds?"

Sir Fielding smiled.

"Good, then, it is small," said Maurice Durant.

"Come."

And he strode up the narrow path with the bearing of an emperor.

Sir Fielding walked at his side, wondering and marvelling, scarce able to persuade himself that he had not gone to sleep in the hot sunshine and was in the land of a dream.

Opening a small side door with a key, Maurice Durant held it until Sir Fielding had passed through and then, following him, closed and bolted it.

Then together they ascended the darkened stairs, lined with dim, dust-covered faces of past and gone Durants, and glittering here and there with patches of gold carving, still unfaded.

Stopping at a door, which Sir Fielding remembered as the entrance to Gerald Durant's own room, Maurice Durant unlocked it, and as before held it for Sir Fielding to pass.

As he entered the baronet started. The room was furnished as it was, the furniture occupied the same places as it did in the time when the Rectory was the glory of the county.

Every chair was in its old place, the sunlight falling on the same cabinet, the ancient fire irons leaning against the old brass trestles, everything in the room, small and great, as it was the night Maurice Durant's father had fallen dead across its massive table.

Maurice Durant wheeled a chair from the table and with a "Be seated, Sir Fielding," walked to the old cabinet, and, taking a bunch of keys from his pocket, unlocked one of the drawers.

Sir Fielding watched with curious anxiety, feeling half bewildered.

When the drawer was pulled out Maurice Durant went to a cupboard, and, swinging back its carved and gilded door, took from its shelves a large quaint wineflask and a glass.

"Burgundy," he said, with a curt smile; "the only wine the Rectory owns, as you may remember, Sir Fielding. Will you drink?"

Sir Fielding bowed, and silently filled his glass—also quaintly cut and of foreign make.

"It is superb wine!" he said. "Did you find this in the cellars?"

Maurice nodded.

"Ay! An array of bottles, cobwebbed and dust-covered."

"The wine is nearly as old as the house," said Sir Fielding.

"And as little valued," said Maurice Durant, with a strange smile. "I never touch it."

Then he went back to the cabinet and lifted a bag and a small parcel from the drawer.

These he placed on the table, and, unfastening, disclosed to Sir Fielding's astonished gaze a heap of gold and notes, some on foreign, most on English banks.

"Glorious! Heavens, my dear Durant!" he said. "Do you keep this enormous sum of money in that old, worm-eaten cabinet?"

The owner of the treasure bowed with a strange, sombre smile.

"But," continued Sir Fielding, "are you not afraid of burglars? By the way an attempt was made at Lady Mildred's only last night. Nothing would be easier to our London thieves than to break into this old place and despoil with the money."

Maurice Durant smiled again.

"Let them come," he said. "They are welcome to the money so that they do not disturb its owners. Have no fear, Sir Fielding. I have a knack of taking care of my own. I think it worth the fighting for, which, as for this dress, I do not."

"But why not bank it?" said Sir Fielding, even his little business knowledge revolting against such a waste of capital.

"Bank it, why?" replied Maurice Durant, frowning. "That it may breed more? What do I, who live by my gun and spend nothing, want with capital interest? Bah! Sir Fielding, you have lived too long in this old money-flaked island. Had you spent the best or worst part of your life in desert solitudes, among prairie and mountain wilds, living by your hands' strength and your brain's cunning, fighting for your daily life with wild beasts and wilder men, you would know how to spend this glittering dust that takes its value from place, and not from worth."

Sir Fielding bowed.

"Pardon me, Mr. Durant," he said, with earnest gravity. "Mine was a worthless anxiety—yours a noble carelessness. If alas I am compelled to value this dust at the price my fellow man, nay, my creditors, put upon it—"

"Nay, pardon me," broke in Maurice Durant, laying his hand upon the old man's shoulder with a grasp that was almost a caress and had something, too, of the gesture of respect. "You were right—I wrong. The dress is valuable if only for the single reason that it is of service to you. Tell me, is there sufficient there?"

Sir Fielding, not daring to say more for fear of raising the strange being's anger, and deeming it the truest generosity to accept with little verbiage the princely offer, glanced at the notes and weighed the bag.

"More than enough, I think," he said. "I really cannot say. Chudleigh could tell."

"Then let Mr. Chichester estimate it," said Maurice Durant. "The bag is heavy; I would give you more notes but that this pile is all I possess. There is plenty more gold," he added, quickly, seeing the reluctant crossing of Sir Fielding's brow—"more than I shall ever need."

"How can I express my gratitude?" murmured Sir Fielding, the tears in his eyes.

"By not wounding me with thanks," replied the other. "I have few moments of pleasure, Sir Fielding. This is one of them. Do not mix it with alloy."

Sir Fielding rose, and held out his hand.

"You will not let me thank you," he said. "Then let me in addition to taking your gold bag of you one other favour."

Maurice Durant bowed.

"No favour you ask of me shall be refused, or be called such," he replied.

"Let me call you friend!" said Sir Fielding, in a low voice broken with emotion. "Lessen this debt

somewhat, or rather make its weight greater, by breaking the bonds of gratitude which surround you and making the Hall your home. We have thought of you, every day and spoken of you often. From now your name will spell 'saviour' to us. Be the friend in person as you are in deed, and be one of us."

Maurice Durant turned his head away for one moment as if struggling with some intense emotion, but the next he seized the bag with one hand and placing the bundle of notes in Sir Fielding's hand with the other, said, curtly, though somewhat sadly:

"The bag is heavy, I will carry it to the park. Come."

They went, Maurice Durant carefully closing each door—and locking it—as they passed through.

CHAPTER XXIV.

For life, noise, dust, red-hot party faction, Give me an election's fierce distraction.

As far as the Gregsons were concerned the Folly fête had answered its purpose.

Miss Lavinia had, by the aid of her blushes and reputed wealth, entirely succeeded in interesting the Marquis Lantry, who was heard to declare that she was "a duced fine girl and quite fit to sit at the bottom of any gentleman's table."

That from the marquis was wondrously refined admiration.

Miss Bella too had made a decided conquest of the fair-haired boy lord, who when calling the next day had ventured to invite her for a ride, and during it plunged far enough into gallop to transport the handsome and ambitious Bella to the seventh heaven.

Mr. Gregson had got himself recognized by the county and secured—as he had hoped—a shrewd description in the local papers, and Master Tom had drunk unlimited champagne, danced with Mand twice and sold a chestnut cob—rather weak on its fore legs—to Lord Cornthwaite for double its value. As for Mrs. Gregson, she had been bob and nob with titled ladies to her heart's desire, and so one and all of the family were satisfied.

Of course there was a grain of bitterness in the news of Lord Cornthwaite's engagement to Miss Lawley, which his lordship told them himself with a great deal of stammering and much confusion; but the young ladies hoped few consultations; and took the news pretty amiably, guessing assuming his lordship that Miss Lawley was a "dear girl," and that they always did think she had a tender feeling for a certain person, whereas the certain person "belonged" idly to the Misses Gregson as soon as the door was banged breaking out into a chorus of "The designing creature—I knew she'd catch him," quite oblivious of the fact that they had spent no little time or few pains themselves in angling for his lordship.

Mr. Gregson growled not a little the next morning when he walked round his grounds and saw the ravages the workmen and artificial grottoes had made in his flower beds and lawn, and grumbled a great deal when he wrote the "small" obituary which was to satisfy the army of upholsterers, musicians, actors, and others who had helped to make "the confounded nonsense" a success.

"Don't ask me to make an idiot of myself another time," he growled, while at dinner. "I've been caught once; don't expect me to do it again."

"But the girls, my dear," remarked Mrs. Gregson, meekly.

Whereupon Mr. Gregson confounded the girls, and declared that if they couldn't catch their grand fish without so much golden bait they might go without them.

In the evening of the second day after the fête Mr. Tom Gregson burst into the drawing-room with the intelligence that Mr. Townley, the Member for Aunsligh, had just died.

"Eh? What?" exclaimed Mr. Gregson. "Where did you hear it from?" asked his father.

"Stopped a messenger reaching up to the Hall with it," replied Tom, rather sadly, not relishing the suspicious tone of his father's question.

"There will be pretty doings now," he added. "The seat's vacant."

"Of course it is," snapped Mr. Gregson. "You don't suppose a dead man can fill it? Hark, Thomas," shouting to a servant, "put the cob in the dogcart, and tell James I want him to drive me to the station."

"What for, papa?" said Miss Lavinia.

"To telegraph," replied Mr. Gregson, hurrying from the room.

"I could have told the governor that the news was already telegraphed," said Mr. Tom, with a grin. "But he'd have directly asked me how I knew."

Mr. Tom Gregson was quite right; the news had already been telegraphed to the head of the Government and the leader of the Opposition, and both were

already forming their plans for getting the vacant seat.

"We must have a Liberal in," said Lord Foley, "the Liberal whip to the premier. Shall we send Harber down? He wants a seat, and we owe him something, or get Gregson, the Manchester man, to stand?"

"Much influence?" asked the Liberal chief, curiously.

"Well, pretty full. He has more of course than a stranger would have."

"Better write to Lord Parker, the agent, down then," said the premier.

Almost at the same moment a conference was going on between the leaders of the Opposition and his confidants.

"We must not lose the seat," said he, shaking his head; "they have too large a majority as it is. Who is there to send down?"

Several were mentioned as eligible candidates, of course all staunch Tories, but Mr. Chester, the leader, shook his head.

"No, no—would do. Let me see. Sir Fielding Chichester is the man for the place—very popular, eh?"

Write and ask him to put up for it.

"Too old," suggested the Tory whip.

"Yes, that's true," answered his leader. "Let me see. A favourite expression of the honourable gentleman?"

"Hasn't he a son, Mr. Charles or Chudleigh Chichester?"

"Chudleigh," said the Tory whip.

"I thought so. Name him. Explain the situation and declare that it calls for him."

So that it came to pass that the morning express carried two parliamentary agents down to Grassmere, one to Sir Fielding Chichester from the Tory side, asking him to put forward his son, and one to William Gregson, Esq., of the Polly, Grassmere, to request him to stand for the Liberal interest.

"Chudleigh," said Sir Fielding, "read that."

Chudleigh read and returned the letter, looking neither delighted nor surprised.

It needed more than an offer of a chance for the seat of Annaleigh to dispel the gloom of his spirits.

"Well?" said Sir Fielding, whose cheeks were flushed, and he was looking particularly well and happy.

"Well, sir," said Chudleigh, "what do you wish me to do?"

"I—I don't know," said Sir Fielding. "It is a great honour, some would say, a great piece of luck—the second this week, dear Chud, he added, significantly, glancing at the ornamental iron safe which held the water-witch to clear off the Hall mortgage."

Chudleigh flushed.

"You wish me to stand, sir?"

"I think so," said Sir Fielding, hesitating, his usual irresolute look wrinkling his forehead. "What do you say, Maud?"

"Ah, let us ask Maudie," said Chudleigh, laying his hand upon her arm.

"You haven't told me yet what the honour is, you seem to hesitate so in accepting," said Maud, with her sweet smile, returning Chudleigh's caresses by stroking his hand.

"Mr. Chester, or rather the Tory whip, has written to ask Chudleigh to stand for Annaleigh," said Sir Fielding.

"A member of parliament!" said Maud, woman-like, jumping to the conclusion that no one could do anything else but vote for her brother.

"Not quite," said Chudleigh. "I may not be returned, supposing I stand for it."

"Ah, hem, yes," said Sir Fielding, meditatively, thinking, though he did not like to say so, that the heir to Chichester Hall stood a good chance. "Dear me, dear me," he continued, "to think that Tom, whom I know at Eton, poring over his Virgil, should be lying dead, and my son asked to take his place—not over Virgil—but in the House! It reminds me that I cannot be far from that last parliament."

"Papa," exclaimed Maud, the tears springing to her eyes, while Chudleigh said:

"You are many years younger than Mr. Towaley, sir."

"A few, a few," murmured Sir Fielding. "I remember. But about the seat, Chud—about the seat. What will you do?"

"Whatever you choose, sir," said Chudleigh, indifferently and dutifully.

"But I don't choose—I never can," said Sir Fielding, getting worried. "I should like to see you in parliament."

"Then get in, dear Chud," whispered Maud, and Chudleigh, rising, said, with an air of decision:

"Then I think I will stand, sir; what time does the letter say Mr. Jones, the agent, may be expected?"

"By the—the— Look, Maud, my dear, my eyes—"

"The express, Chud," said Maud.

"I will send the brougham for him," said Chudleigh, and left the room to make the first move in the game which he and Mr. Gregson were to play.

Directly Mr. Jones had received Chudleigh's affirmative reply to the letter asking him to stand for Annaleigh he requisitioned a light dog-cart and a couple of the fastest hacks, one to use and the other to be kept ready, and drove off at a breakneck pace for the printers, the result of which visit appeared in the evening in the shape of a thousand yellow placards posted through Grassmere, Annaleigh, and Warrington, setting forth Mr. Chudleigh Chichester's parliamentary address and requesting the votes of the loyal and independent voters of the borough.

No sooner were the yellow bills displayed than they were covered by larger and more flaming placards of a cerulean hue, containing Mr. William Gregson's address to the free and independent voters, and before ten o'clock yet another bill, this time of a brilliant crimson, was flashing from every available spot, declaring that Gideon Giles, the labourer's friend, offered himself as the working-man's Republican candidate to the free, independent and patriotic voters.

Sir Fielding Chichester, when the news of the two rivalships was brought to him, was first astounded, then enraged—more enraged than he had ever been in his life before.

"What!" he said, his mild voice raised to a high pitch of indignation. "Mr. Gregson the Government candidate, is it possible!—and Gideon?—what did you say the fellow's name was, Mr. Jones?"

—Giles? Gideon Giles, a Radical—red Republican! Chudleigh, it was an insult. You must win, you shall if it ruin me. I will show them that a Tory can be patriotic and ruin himself to prevent a Radical or a Liberal gaining a seat he has proclaimed for!"

"My dear Sir Fielding," exclaimed Mr. Jones, in an ecstasy. "If you will only talk like that on the hustings, the seat is yours. Glorious!"

Chudleigh only smiled.

Sir Fielding paced the library, book in hand.

"Where is Maud?" he said.

"In her room with her maid, giving instructions for the making of several thousand rosettes and streamers," said Chudleigh, wearily.

"Tell—yes, tell her I want her," said Sir Fielding.

Chudleigh went up the huge staircase and returned with Maud, who looked surprised at the sight of the angry expression on her father's usually placid face.

"Do you want me, papa?" she said.

"Yes, Maud," he replied. "Here have these Gregson people abused our kindness, by opposing Chudleigh's election! Mr. Gregson has put up for the borough."

"Oh, papa," said Maud, sorrowfully, perceiving what was going to happen.

"It is astounding," said Sir Fielding. "Of course, Maudie, from this time you must have nothing to say to them. I will not brook such an insult."

"But, papa," murmured Maud, her gentle spirit reluctant to obey.

"There, there, go and make your ribbons, my darling, and mind what I say! We must not recognize these Gregsons to-night!"

Maud went away sorrowfully, already regretting that she had helped to influence Chudleigh to accept the Tory offer, and bidding him her penance in constructing yellow rosettes and streamers.

Meanwhile confusion and excitement reigned rampant in the Gregson household.

The head thereof was storming away in his study with Mr. Barker, the agent, and a select committee of the more respectable portion of Warrington, and the Liberals of Annaleigh and Grassmere.

The drawing-room was filled with blue ribbon and blue banners and flags. In the stables the carriages were being decorated with the same colours, and all about the hall lay scattered broadsides and placards.

The girls were half pleased, half doubtful—indeed the latter feeling predominated, and, backed by their brother, they had ventured upon a remonstrance with their father, but he had quickly silenced them with a curt request that they would mind their own business.

Tom was troubled, for he guessed that Sir Fielding would be annoyed at his father's opposition to Chudleigh, and dreaded that the family communications between Polly and Hall would be cut off.

And rather than lose his talks and walks with Maud, whom he loved to desperation, poor Tom would have been delighted for his father to lose a hundred seats; therefore he anathematized the whole business, and returned to the stables with his hands thrust into the depths of his tight pockets and an emphatic declaration, in reply to a request from his father that he would join the committee, that he would have nothing to do with the stupid affair.

On the morrow Sir Fielding drove Maud and Chudleigh through the village and Annaleigh with yellow rosettes on their horses' heads and a yellow streamer at the men's button-holes.

Mr. Jones had already dashed away in the dog-cart to form the committee, and had begged Sir Fielding to "show himself."

"Where are we going, papa?" asked Maud, when they had reached the end of Annaleigh, and had bowed to a volley of cheering from a group of Tories assembled at the "King's Head," the "Yellow" house.

"I'm sure I don't know," said Sir Fielding, with rather a bewildered air.

"Let us go to Aunt Mildred's," said Maud. "Do, papa; see, here is quite a crowd of people coming," and she flushed with nervous agitation.

"Very well," said Sir Fielding, bowing to the cheering and cries of "Mr. Chichester for ever," "Up with the Yellow and down with the Blue." "Very well."

"Drop me here, sir," said Chudleigh, flushing slightly. "I promised to meet Mr. Jones and the committee."

And he leapt to the ground.

Sir Fielding turned the horses' heads in the direction of the Cottage.

No sooner had he done so than Mr. Gregson's heavily plated barouche dashed up, and the occupants, Mr. Gregson and the two girls, bowed and smiled.

Sir Fielding's face grew stern and proud, and Maud's crisened. Neither acknowledged the salute of the Gregsons.

Mr. Gregson flushed angrily.

"Ah!" he said. "Sir Fielding's going to play the 'high and mighty.' Just like a Tory! Well, I'll show him I can beat 'em at their own game."

And he leant back in the gaudy equipage with the air of an emperor.

The "Blue Goat" was the Liberal head-quarters. There a large crowd of free-and-independentists had collected to welcome their wealthy candidate.

Farther on at the "Hag and Whistle" in Warrington, a mob of factory hands and roughs were yelling round a short, thick-set cobbler, Mr. Gideon Giles, who was assuring them that liberty, equality and fraternity were the key words of human happiness; and that a working-man's Republic was the only thing to save England from slavery and ruin.

Mr. Gideon Giles's oratory was fervid and somewhat roughly eloquent, but not altogether lucid.

Sir Fielding, on arriving at Lady Mildred's found Lord Crownbrilliant seated in the drawing-room with Carlotta, and was greeted by his lordship with a delicate shake of the hand and the assurance that the Tawies would be sure to win.

"You are on Mr. Chichester's committee, are you not?" said Carlotta, turning her face as she spoke toward Maud.

"Eh? No—no—I'm not," said Lord Crownbrilliant, fixing his eyes with an anxious glance at the averted face and longing to discover if his beautiful mistress wished him to be.

"Oh," said Carlotta, raising her eyebrows. "I thought you were."

"Not—yes," said Lord Crownbrilliant, reading her look rightly. "But I'm going to be if Mr. Chichester will have me! He! he!"

"Only too honoured, my lord," said Sir Fielding, bowing. "I will lose no time in informing Chudleigh of your kindness."

"Dear Chudleigh will have to fight very hard, so they tell me," said Maud to Carlotta.

"Will he?" asked Carlotta eagerly. "Is there any possibility of his losing?"

"Oh, great," said Maud. "The Liberals are very strong—at least, I think I heard papa say so. I'm afraid to speak, for I do not understand it one half, and the Radicals—Mr. Gideon Giles's party, you know—are not at all to be laughed at."

Carlotta's eyes, which had been lowered while Maud had been speaking, raised themselves with a sudden flash that surprised her gentle companion.

"He must win!" she murmured.

"He will if all his friends help him, he says," said Maud. "Ah, here is aunt."

The story had to be given over again.

"What can I do?" said Lady Mildred, all on fire.

"Can I go and get votes, or what?"

Sir Fielding smiled.

"I don't know."

Carlotta from her nook on the sofa said, with a tone of well-bred interest:

"Might we not drive into the town with the yellow colours, Sir Fielding?"

"The very thing!" he exclaimed. "How thoughtful you are, my dear Carlotta. I'll order the carriages at once, and tell Walker to make some rosettes."

Carlotta rose with a well-assumed air of languor:

"I thought you would want some," she said, "so I told her to do some up last night, and I have made a few myself."

"First wait!" exclaimed Lord Crownbrilliant. "Come along, Sir Fielding; we'll put some on my carriage. By Jove! I'll have every c-cart in the neighbourhood decovated!"

"Papa, I cannot understand Carlotta," said Maud, thoughtfully, as they drove off.

"Nor I," said Sir Fielding. "She is a strange girl—most mysterious—but she has set her heart on Chudleigh winning his election. I can see that."

Sir Fielding spoke the truth.

(To be continued.)

CHRISTMAS IN ROME.

THE ceremony of Christmas morning is hardly to be distinguished from that of Easter; there is the same display of magnificent costumes, the same array of ambassadors, naval and military officers in uniform, ladies in black dresses and veils, and peasants from all parts in holiday dress, forming a strangely beautiful and gorgeously variegated picture. Then comes the same long procession of all the religious orders, in their rich robes of black, white, gray, brown, violet, and scarlet, and the Pope, in his comparatively plain dress of simple white, on his chair, borne by tall footmen, with the glittering canopy carried over his head, and the great fans of white peacocks' feathers by his side, like some Eastern monarch of old, heralded by silver trumpets, and surrounded by his guard of nobles, and the stalwart Swiss, with halberd in hand and helmet on head, and striped coats of black and yellow and red, quaint but picturesque. Then follows the same tedious ceremony of homage, and then the grand mass, at which the pope himself officiates, the whole ceremony lasting till nearly noon, after which you may be sure the greater part of those present retire thoroughly wearied to their homes—for fatigue will dare to intrude in spite of the presence of pope and cardinals and all the priests of Christendom, and not even Pius IX. can abolish the necessity of sleep.

Heavily falls the head on the pillow, and the over-taxed brain, so loaded with strange experiences in a strange city at this festive season, gladly suffers the wearied eyes to close, in order to wake up ready to take in more novelties later in the day—but not in church ceremonies, of these a sufficient dose has been taken to last for some time; the next thing to be tried is a Christmas dinner so far from England.

What will it be like? Seated at the long table d'hôte, with many of our compatriots, we might almost hope for the turkey and tongue or chine, roast beef and plum pudding of Old England, but the conversation round the table reminds us that we are in Rome, and we feel almost disappointed when the carte before us announces, in the midst of a great many queer and unknown dishes, the familiar *roast-bird* and *plomb pudding*; however, both were tolerable, although not to be compared with home productions. Then there is turkey also, but turkey devoid of stuffing and broad sauce is scarcely turkey; but to make amends there is wild pig, with a curious sauce, of which the chief ingredients seem to be raisins, the seeds of pine cones, and the little lupin beans, which are a favourite vegetable, and of which a legend is told to the effect that during the flight into Egypt the fugitives, fearing pursuers, took shelter in a field of lupins, but the lupins trembled and shook, and well nigh betrayed them to their enemies, whereupon the Virgin decreed that henceforth men should eat them and not be satisfied; and in truth they are very light and unsatisfying diet. Then for other vegetables we get stewed fennel roots, artichokes, and fried potatoes; then for game woodcocks and ortolans, the latter tiny birds sold on a stick ready to cook, with a thin slice of bacon and one of bread between each bird, which probably are only sparrows, who, like many worthier characters, are more honoured after death than during life.

These, with many more indescribable comestibles, composed a Christmas bill of fare, washed down by a flask of sweet Orvieto or Monte Fiascone, or other Italian wine, or the vin ordinaire of Rome, which is a rough sort of claret, sound and wholesome. For dessert we get oranges, grapes, almonds, figs, pears; but the fruit of Rome is neither so good nor so abundant as in other Italian cities.

AN order has just been received at Woolwich from the War Office for 100,000 Shrapnell shells, to be manufactured with despatch for exportation to India.

DISCOVERY OF A SKELETON.—The skeleton of a man, apparently about 40 or 50 years of age, and five feet six inches high, has recently been found in Pleasant Wood, Bench Hill, Ashford. Near the left hand was an open clasp knife, toothpick, and cork-screw. A suit of clothes was also found near the body, with a leather purse containing 11. 6s.

SLEEP AS A STIMULANT.—When a man feels too tired to perform his daily labour the best possible

thing for him to do is to go to bed and sleep a week if he can. This is the only true recuperation of brain power, the only actual renewal of brain force. To resort to stimulants in such cases is to commit slow suicide. Mere stimulants supply nothing in themselves—they only goad the brain, force it to greater consumption of its substance, until that substance has been so fully exhausted that there is not power enough left to receive a supply, just as men are so near death by thirst or starvation that there is not power enough left to swallow anything, and all is over. The incapacity of the brain for receiving recuperative particles sometimes comes on with the rapidity of a stroke of lightning, and the man becomes mad in an instant, loses sense, and is an idiot. It was under circumstances of this very sort, in the middle of a sentence of great oratorical power, one of the most eminent minds of the age forgot his ideas, pressed his hand upon his forehead, and, after a moment's silence, said, "Heaven, as with a sponge, has blotted out my mind." Be assured, reader, "There is rest for the weary" only in early and abundant sleep, and wise and happy are they who have firmness enough to resolve that "By Heaven's help I will seek it in no other way."

THE SISTER'S PLEA.

FORGIVE dear brother Andy,

He is not so much to blame

As the ones that led him on, father—

Be it to their shame!

Though he's been to you a trial

For this many and many a day,

Yet I know he's sound at heart, father,

Think what'er you may.

Don't be too hard on Andy,

For you know, though he is wild,

That in point of years, dear father,

He is nothing but a child;

That when poor mother left him,

To seek her rest abroad,

She left him to our care, father—

Left him to our love.

I talk to brother Andy,

And it pricks him to the heart;

When I speak of our great loss, father,

Off his tears will start;

And I know the good will conquer,

If we only—you and I—

Can have patience with the lad, father,

Seeking aid on high.

Then don't be hard on Andy,

Call him not an idle sot;

He's a brother dear to me, father,

And all the son you've got.

And if prayers were ever answered

In Heaven's well-perfected plan,

Then our poor, misguided boy, father,

Will rise to be a man!

SCIENCE.

A PLANET BETWEEN MERCURY AND THE SUN.—Mr. J. R. Hind, the astronomer, shows that there is a high probability that a planet circulates between Mercury and the sun, having a period of revolution of about nineteen days. Mr. Hind suggests that on March 24th next the sun's disc should be watched, as a conjunction of this hypothetical planet with the sun will occur about 10 a.m. on that day.

IMPORTANT TELEGRAPHIC EXPERIMENT.—Between London and Penzance an experiment was tried the other day which, by its success, seems to demonstrate that messages may be sent with perfect accuracy from both ends of a telegraph wire at the same time. The process by which this wonderful result was accomplished, and which in its extension will, it is hoped, practically double our existing wires, and pave the way for farther reductions in the charges for the transmission of messages, is the invention of Mr. W. H. Preece, one of the engineers of the postal telegraph staff.

IRON IN MISSOURI.—Professor Waterhouse, in a recent paper on the resources of Missouri, gives the following description of the iron mountains, for which the State is famous: "Shepherd Mountain is 600 feet high. The ore contains a large percentage of iron. The height of Pilot Knob above the Mississippi river is 1,114 feet. Its base, 581 feet from the summit, is 300 acres. The upper section of 141 feet is judged to contain 14,000,000 tons of ore. The elevation of Iron Mountain is 223 feet, and the area of its base 500 acres. The solid contents of the cone are 250,000,000 tons. It is thought that every foot beneath the surface will yield 3,000,000 tons. At the depth of 150 feet the artesian auger was still penetrating solid ore. These mountains contain enough ore above the surface to afford for two hundred years an annual supply

of 1,000,000 tons. The iron is strong, tough, and fibrous."

ARMOUR V. GUNS.—Had two "Warriors" engaged one another with their original armament of 68-pounder smooth-bored guns they would have failed to penetrate each other's sides at 200 yards. With the guns afterwards placed in them, the Woolwich 7-inch, they could pierce each other's armour up to a range of about 1,270 yards, supposing them to act under the most favourable circumstances. Two "Devastations" or "Thunderers" with the 35-ton gun could pierce each other's armour of 14-inch plates at about 1,200 yards, while two "Glattons," carrying 25-ton guns, would have to come within about 1,220 yards to penetrate 14-inch armour, and 1,560 yards to pierce the 12-inch armour. As a matter of fact, it is probable, from the vessels receiving the shot at an oblique angle to their sides, that they might advance still closer to the muzzles of the guns than has been indicated. It is obvious then that while armour is not what it was at the first moment of its adoption, it has not been mastered by the guns at all to the extent generally supposed, two "Thunderers" having, in fact, rather less power to destroy each other than two "Warriors" carrying 7-inch guns.

FREEZING WATER IN BOTTLES.—In the winter of 1865-66 water was frozen solid in glass bottles, filled to the corks, without breaking them, by the following method: Several bottles were filled with water, and perforated corks were inserted into their necks, rather tightly. A glass tube, open at both ends, and drawn to a narrow conical point, was then inserted point downwards through the corks, to a little below the middle of each bottle. The tubes were of rather thick glass, having about a 3-16 inch bore, and projected about an inch above the corks. The bottles thus prepared were set in an exposed place in extremely cold weather, and left over night. On the following morning they were found to be unbroken, yet each bottle was filled with solid ice. The covers and tubes, having been forced out, were lying beside them on the shelf. A portion of the water had frozen in the tubes, and this ice was forced up and partly projected out at their tops to the height of an inch or more, and was more or less bent to one side and downwards. This must have taken place before the tubes themselves began to be forced up by the expansion consequent upon freezing. Thus the tube at first served as a vent while the water was freezing at the top and bottom and all around its own circumference; but at length, the ice beginning to form about the conical point of the tube, this was gradually forced up, the space which was gradually relinquished in the centre of the bottle being sufficient to compensate for the farther expansion of the water.

ASTOUNDING MESMERIC POWER.—A curious case of mesmerism is recorded by the civil surgeon of Hoshungabad. A young woman named Nunnee, aged 24, was married some twelve years ago; she, however, did not go to her husband's house for two years afterwards. After staying with him for eight days she suddenly became insensible, and remained so for two or three days. She was taken back to her mother and soon got well. Then follows a very remarkable history. During the next four or five years she never entered her husband's house without falling insensible and remaining so. He was very kind and attentive to her, and she liked him; but whenever he came into her presence she at once sank into this state. This went on till she became emaciated and exhausted, and at last her parents applied to court for a separate maintenance for her. While she was in court the husband entered and she instantly became insensible, and was carried to the hospital, where the case was carefully attended to by Dr. Cullen, in March, last year. While in this state her pulse was even, breathing soft, her body pliant, but she could eat nothing. Experiments were carefully made to see if there was no trick about it. While she was in bed her husband was muffled up and made to walk through the ward. She said she felt he was near her, and she was by no means well, but had not seen him anywhere about. Next day this experiment was repeated, and she actually became insensible as before. When the husband left the place she recovered. The experiment as to the influence of the husband's presence was tried in all sorts of ways. He was made to pass behind her, and to be near her in a separate ward, but this had no effect; but whenever he was brought to look on her face, though muffled up, or disguised as a policeman, as a sepo, and so forth, she was at once influenced. The experiments continued for about a month, and the conclusion was that the husband unconsciously mesmerized her. The court came to the conclusion that it was impossible she could live with him, and a separate allowance was ordered. The husband was asked to try if he could not remove the effect, saying that he had the power to cause it, but he was quite frightened at the idea of having the power, and could not control it in any way.



[VON SCHUBERT'S WARNING.]

THE SECRET OF SCHWARZENBURG.

CHAPTER XXVI.

My heart. *Shakespeare.*
Is true as steel.

So it happened just after dead midnight the nodding sentinel on the bridge started up at a loud hail and stared with amazement as the body of horsemen came galloping over to him.

He had lifted his weapon menacingly, but a single glance at the signet ring on the white hand bared of its glove for the purpose made him lower it as hastily and bend in an humble attitude of submission.

On rode the horsemen, sweeping up the heights, following the graceful curve of the road, and gaining at length the broad lawn. Foremost rode the prince, meeting haughtily the challenge of the three sentinels, and it was his own hands that sent the loud alarm startling every sleeper in the great building.

"Who comes at this unseemly hour?" asked an angry and haughty voice from a balcony above.

"One who has a right to intrude at any hour," answered the prince, as haughtily.

The Baron Valentin knew the voice. He gave a little shiver and fell back in amazement.

"Who is there?" shouted Von Schubert, in a still fiercer tone, from the other side.

Quickly and angrily rang out the intruder's answer:

"How long am I to be kept here waiting? Come down, Von Schubert, and see for yourself."

"Good Heavens! it is the prince! What evil errand has brought him here at this hour?" muttered Von Schubert, in utter consternation, as he scrambled back and called hastily to his valet.

In as brief a time as might be where every hand was shaking with vague alarm, as well as the nervousness of haste, the great doors swung open, and into the dimly lighted hall strode the new comer, followed by his men.

Von Schubert, with bared head bent low, stood waiting.

"Your royal highness has important business, surely."

"None other would have brought me here—in truth, I have little liking for the place," was the crusty reply. "I am going to search every nook and cranny of this building. But first, Von Schubert, I want to know where is the secret passage-way?" he added, eagerly.

"The secret passage way, your highness? In all

my experience here I have heard of no such thing," returned Von Schubert.

"Call up the servants—all the old servants; and bring in that very dignified and noble, gentleman who first hailed me—I mean the Baron Valentin Baer."

"I am here," spoke a cold, stern voice, and the baron, hastily robed in a dressing-gown, advanced haughtily.

There was no obeisance, not even a bow of salutation, but with a pale face and a flashing eye the baron confronted dauntlessly this rudely coming and unwelcome though royal visitor.

A careless and yet curious and withal contemptuous smile played across the prince's face.

"I hope I see the Baron Baer in the enjoyment of health and honour and happiness," spoke he, in a tone of ironical politeness. "It is a long time since I have had the pleasure of meeting your lordship. If I remember right, I made a few promises to you. I trust you will not accuse me of failing to fulfil them."

The baron glared at him, but held back the passion which mastered him. He moved slowly towards the stairs.

"I heard my name called. I supposed there was some matter of importance requiring my presence," he said; "but as I was mistaken I will return to my chamber."

"Where we may visit you again," sneered the prince. "I want you to show me the way to the secret passage. Lead on."

"The secret passage!" repeated the baron, looking over to Von Schubert for an explanation.

"Is there any such?" asked the latter.

"Not to my knowledge; on my honour, Von Schubert, I answer you truly."

"I never heard of it," said Von Schubert.

"Call up the servants, every soul!" thundered the prince.

They came in, a startled group, huddling together with blank faces and sleepy eyes, hardly yet clear from the cobwebs of dreams.

Who knew of a secret passage?

Not a soul answered.

The brow of the prince grew black and wrathful.

"I will tear down the old walls but I will find it," muttered he. "Ho, then, my men, let us go forward and search every room."

"Where is Wirt Womberg?" asked one of the housemaids, timidly. "Perhaps that is what he meant when he said one day that there had been trusts bequeathed him that would perish when he died."

"Who is the man?" questioned the prince, sharply.

"One of the old Schwarzenburg servants," answered Von Schubert, looking around from face to face. "I do not see him here."

"Did I not order you to call them? Bring the man hither without delay," commanded the prince, stamping with impatience.

Two or three of the under servants darted away, and one returned shortly, leading a mild-faced, gray-haired man, who bowed with respect, but yet not with the accustomed subservieney of his class.

"I want you to lead me to the secret passage," said the prince, commandingly. "Lose no time, but lead the way."

"Your royal highness must pardon me," answered the old man, with simple dignity; "it is impossible."

"Impossible? what do you mean, sirrah? Do you deny the existence of such a place?"

"I deny nothing, your highness. I only say it is impossible that I should lead you to such a place."

"Do you mean that you do not know where or how to find it?"

Wirt Womberg was silent.

He only folded his arms in a sort of passive resignation to whatever fate might have in store for him.

"This is courteous and loyal treatment!" raged the prince. "Do you forget who I am, and what command I hold here? Answer me truthfully, old man, and speedily. Do you know of such a secret passage?"

The poor old man's face blanched a little, but there was no quailing of the fearless eyes.

"Yes, your highness, there is such a place."

The black frown faded from the royal tyrant's face; his eyes glittered with savage exultation.

"Lead on to it then."

Old Wirt Womberg stood with folded arms, and moved not a step.

"Did you hear my command?" thundered the prince.

"I heard, your highness, but I told you before I could not obey."

"Do you refuse to comply?" was the stern demand.

"I do. It is my duty to refuse," was the firm return.

"Ho, Womberg! come forward and see what you can do to bring the obstinate idiot to reason. You may try your sword or pistols, the rack, fire, torture of any kind. Give him ten minutes to show us the spot," was the pitiless command.

"It will avail nothing," said Wirt Womberg, sorrowfully. "It is forty years since I took the oath

at the old baron's knees by my father's side, with his hand in blessing on my head—an oath never to reveal my knowledge of this secret to any except a Schwarzenburg who had entered into possession. They are dead now, your highness, but my oath is sacred still."

How much nobler and more princely looked the dignified old man in his very simplicity than this perverted scion of a royal house!

A little thrill went through the frightened lookers on, but the prince only gave a more sinister and evil smile.

"Poor idiot," he said, "you will soon be convinced that your first duty is to your sovereign."

"My sovereign is not here. His majesty the king has not commanded me," returned the brave old servant.

The prince stamped his foot in his rage.

"Insolent beggar, you shall learn that I already represent the dignity I shall speedily wear for myself. Delay not, Herrnsberg; teach him reason. We mean while will search the house."

Von Schubert had been hastily whispering with the Baron.

He came forward now, but with a little nervous trepidation.

"Not every room, I hope, your highness. There is Lady Viola's room to be exempt, I beg of you."

"Lady Viola—and who may she be?" asked the prince, contemptuously, striding past the speaker and flashing his angry glance around the quailing group. "Once for all you may understand that there are to be no rooms exempt. I will find that secret passage to-night."

Von Schubert's haughty face flushed scarlet, his eye kindled with an eagle-glance, and he strode forward with uplifted hand.

But at that moment there was a rustle of silken drapery at the head of the staircase.

He rushed up, and forcibly drew Viola back, whispering, entreatingly:

"Viola, Viola, do not show yourself. That man's admiring glance is like a deadly smother to the noblest and purest of women. Do not court it. Hide your face if it may be, I pray you."

"Did I hear him declare that every room is to be searched—what, even mine, and poor Stephano's chamber?" she returned, in the same hasty whisper. "Searched for what? What has happened—what does he suspect?"

"Heaven alone knows. I can see that he is in a fierce and uncontrollable mood. Avoid his eye, I beg of you."

"I will go to Stephano's chamber," she said, slowly, and then paused and turned back and clung to his arm.

"Herr Von Schubert," said she, "I am your betrothed bride now; you have a right to ask me to avoid this man, and I shall do my best to obey you. There is something else I would tell you, but have not the time. But save us from intrusion in Stephano's chamber if you can."

"Heaven alone knows if anything will turn him. He has already proceeded to measures quite exceeding his position. He is not thinking yet," muttered Von Schubert, while he pressed his lips to the fair hands that clung to him so trustfully.

And he hurried back, hearing a shrieking cry from one of the servant women below, and understanding that poor old Wirt's trial had begun.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Arm the obdured breast.

With stubborn patience as with triple steel.

Milton.

"WAKEN, my Serena, my queen of happy prisoners. How can you sleep so tranquilly, remembering that the day dawns upon us amid locks and bars, and in this grim light from which the odious shutters bar out the sunbeams?" whispered Leina in Serena's ear, dropping a kiss between every word or two upon the clear white cheek.

Serena looked up with a start, stared down a moment at her crumpled dress, and rose up.

"Why, grandmother, dear," began she, and then paused, the smile fading off from her lips, and a little tremor crossing her face. "Ah, I had forgotten. Good-morning, Leina. I am glad to see you cheerful. Can it be really day?"

"I suppose it is. I found a chink in the shutter, and put my eye to it, and behold the sunlight sparkling warm and bright upon the water. Don't look so woe-begone, Serena, darling, or I shall sit down myself and weep; and that would not do, I am sure, for my weeping is as stormy and fierce as my delight is wild and jubilant."

"I was thinking of my poor old grandmother. I fear she is shedding bitter tears for me. And my dear little school. Ah, me, Leina, it will never do for me to think about it! Come, let us go out and see how our patient has prospered. Have you heard anything of our jailer?"

"Yes—I heard him try the door of the other room. If he had been polite enough to knock I should have opened it for him. You must go out and see our fellow captive, dear. Are we to hunt about like the birds and chickens for our own breakfast, or will it come, as it does to all caged creatures? Oh, that we were in fairy-land and had a wand!"

"Let me try what my spells may invoke," said Serena. "The man has a gentle spot in his heart certainly. It was very good of him to furnish us with this basin of water, for it must be a trouble to find fresh water on this sterile spot. Now that my face at least has had its morning freshening I must go out and see how the night has fared with our patient."

She spoke the last in a raised tone of voice with her hand on the bolt, which she slipped purposely with much noise to give warning of her approach.

She found him sitting up, having evidently made a successful attempt at a morning toilet.

"You are better," she said, joyfully, though in a low and guarded voice.

"Much better; quite well indeed, except for the thump on my head, and a little languor and weakness. And you—I hope you have been able to find some sleep, notwithstanding the unpleasant and painful situation," he returned, earnestly.

"I have. If only I did not know how keenly our friends are suffering, I should be inclined to treat it like a frolic. Somehow I cannot anticipate any positive evil. The man has a mercenary object. He believes, as we all do, that Leina belongs to some great and wealthy family. He thinks he shall receive a generous ransom. He will get it I think, with the assurance also of his own escape from punishment for the daring deed. Then we shall all be released. If I could only send word to my poor grandmother, to relieve her fears, I think I could be contented here."

"I am sure I could," replied Stephano, heartily, with an earnest gaze into Serena's face which brought the faint blushes there. "But what must be done? I have been puzzling and puzzling half the night to imagine a way for me to serve you. I have little doubt that I can overpower this man who has been left in charge; but what can I do then? I have no boat, and, as I understand it, around the approach to our prison the surf beats constantly. Can you show me in what way to serve you?"

"Patient waiting seems the present duty," returned Serena, gently. "You are not strong enough to match that powerful man. Besides, the leader may have returned, and they are both armed. No, no; while we are treated respectfully and kindly I cannot consent to any violent attempt at escape. I am in hope, that this man Jack will explain the situation more fully. Hush! Some one is coming."

Stephano lay back heavily and closed his eyes, turning his face toward the wall and into the shadow.

After a glance to see that he was prepared Serena opened the door, and Robinson's accomplice, Mills, came in with a large basket in his hand.

"Robinson has brought this over. He says I am to let you come into the kitchen if you like. There's a stove there, and the tea kettle is boiling."

"Excellent," smiled Serena. "Come, Leina, and see that the breakfast has come to the captives, only it must be prepared. I think there is really no other way than to make ourselves contented and comfortable."

"The very best way indeed, mum," said Mills, approvingly. "There won't be a hair of your heads harmed if you're only quiet and peaceable."

"We will try to be. If you don't mind, you may leave us the kitchen, and we'll set out our table in the other room."

"Yes," said Mills, after scraping another awkward bow. "I'll go and look after my pots. I shall lock the doors, so you needn't try to get out," he added, with a roguish smile; "it will be time lost out of the breakfast."

And he went out, and the heavy key turned after him.

"This is jolly enough," laughed Leina. "I don't think I can be miserable if I try. I would like to push open those shutters; but the perforated holes admit more light than one would believe."

And then, skipping back archly, she said, gaily: "Rise, sir knight, and come out and see a queen serving her subjects! You may as well improve the opportunity for free rambling. Sir knight, why, you have not told us your name!"

"You must call me Stephano. That is the only true part of my name I dare reveal at present," he returned, rising with alacrity and walking a little unsteadily across the floor to the door of the little kitchen.

Serena turned her head with a mingling smile and blush. She had rolled up her sleeves from the round, white arms, and was busy pouring the steaming water upon the coffee, whose fragrant aroma presently filled the place.

"All my accomplishments will come in play I fancy."

Leina, dear, you were to beat up those eggs for the omelet."

"I might do that," said Stephano, wistfully.

She shook her head authoritatively.

"Not to-day. If the idle hands take to mischief to-morrow we will see what employment can be found for them. You are to have invalid's fare to-day—toast and a wee bit of omelet."

And then she flitted back to the table and stirred away dextrously at the preparation there, looking just the same grand, noble creature that she would have been robed in velvet and seated in some aristocratic drawing-room.

Stephano's eyes followed every movement admiringly, and could hardly leave the lovely, gentle countenance when, having bolted the inner door against any sudden intrusion on Mills's part, the three sat down to the table for their breakfast.

And a merry meal it was. Young hearts are light and buoyant; and, despite their novel and uncertain position, each one secretly acknowledged the enjoyment of the occasion.

"Three felon prisoners indeed!" cried Leina, merrily, as she rose up. "I do believe we are every one of us secretly delighted with the situation."

"I don't pretend to deny it," said Stephano, gaily. "I am mentally struggling from my plain duty of knocking down this accommodating jailer and bearing you off to your grieving friends, just because it would put an end to this romantic experience."

"It would be much more romantic if we were allowed to roam along the rocks and plunge into the surf. You ought to be able to swim gallantly away, bearing us from a devouring dragon. That would be true heroism!" laughed Leina. "You are a very commonplace mortal, indeed, sitting over a breakfast prepared by the queen heroine."

"It was a hero who fearlessly came to our rescue last night," said Serena, softly, with a shining approval in her blue eyes that made Stephano's heart beat warmly. "It would take a long series of commonplace affairs to efface that from my memory."

"Would that I might have been of effectual service," returned Stephano.

"Hush!" interrupted Leina. "Go back to insensibility as quickly as possible. There comes the jailer again. It is a new idea to have bars on both sides. We might play keeping prison with him."

Serena hurried away Stephano's dishes while Leina worked away at the bolt.

"It is an ugly thing for such little fingers," said Mills, with a grinning glance at the girl's white hands. "The bolt must be oiled. I'm glad you're having a good time. I heard you laughing."

"If you would let us go out on the rocks, or down to the water, it would be more pleasant," coaxed Leina. He shook his head decidedly.

"That's against orders, and I can tell you Jack Robinson isn't an easy fellow when he's against you. I'm going to fill out the rocks for your dinner, you know, and to keep a kind of a watch at the same time. I shan't be out of hearing, though. And don't you be trying any tricks now. I tell you it ain't of no kind of use. You're just as safe from getting away as if you were in prison."

"I suppose we are," returned Leina; "at all events we are going to very innocent work, so you needn't be concerned. We are going to wash the dishes. So depart, jailer."

She flourished a cloth towards him, laughing at his sudden retreat, and came back to tell it over merrily to the others.

"So we are free from watching again," exclaimed Stephano, springing up. "I am afraid we shan't have such comfortable times when the other one returns. He is a sharper as well as a more tyrannical man. It is best for me to make a thorough exploration of the house while it is possible."

"Go, then; for when we have finished the work in true housekeeper style I shall expect to hear my story. Remember that I am burning with impatience all this while," returned Leina.

And Stephano went over the place into every spot where he could find his way.

He came back with arms filled with straw, then went out to the kitchen, and filled the stove, and kept replenishing until his stock was exhausted.

"What is that for?" asked Leina, curiously.

"Not for much, I fancy. I only thought the smoke might possibly draw attention, and excite somebody's curiosity. But I suppose, at a little distance, it will look like the spray of the surf. There has been but one feasible mode of escape presented to my mind. We certainly might set fire to the house."

"And burn in it!" exclaimed Leina, indignantly.

"It would be a rather desperate measure, I confess. But you know you are too valuable in the way of ransom to be allowed to burn. It would certainly draw the fishermen here, and the chances would be that one or the other of us might escape, and make known the situation. I wish I could contrive a way

to get into the cellar. I take it that the key is in our jailer's pocket. Did there happen to be any opiate of any sort in the medicine chest you found, Miss Serena? I think this bright little Leina is capable of bewitching him into taking a cup of coffee, and his pockets might thus remain at our mercy. That is plan number two. It has its difficulties like the other. The surf outside that horrible cave is dangerous, I imagine, and a boat might not be there. But then—

"How delightful!" interrupted Leina. "Is it not Serena?"

Serena had gone to the medicine chest. She brought it out, and a bottle of laudanum was confiscated promptly.

"We'll take this by way of precaution in case more trying times come to make desperate measures necessary," observed Stephano. "Has become a wise general."

"And now," said Leina, setting herself beside him—"now, Stephano, you are to tell me all I am longing to hear—the message Aubrey Dalberg sent!"

"Nay," said Stephano, gently, "you misunderstood my meaning, little Leina. Aubrey Dalberg and I have never exchanged a single word. But it is just as true that I know your history, and that he has helped me bring it to you. Aubrey Dalberg is at home in my father's house—in the old ancestral home of the family—detained there unwillingly I dare say, that I might escape under cover of his name and passport. You must know that our family have been closely guarded to prevent this very thing—our fledgling you."

"Finding me!" exclaimed Leina, her brilliant face lighting up more radiantly still. "Do you mean that you came here on purpose to find me?"

"Exactly that, little Leina. And here we are prisoners together, with every possible facility for making each other's acquaintance."

"You came to find me!" repeated the girl in a little ecstasy of delight. "And Aubrey Dalberg helped you to accomplish it?"

Serena lifted her lowered lid, and looked over to Stephano, who was gazing reverently into Leina's eyes. She thought she discovered pique and disdain in his voice as he asked:

"Is this Aubrey Dalberg of so much importance then?"

Leina tossed her head, but a richer colour gathered in her cheeks.

"He promised to be the delivering knight. And he kept his word, however indirectly." Then she added, hastily, "But you have not told me yet. You came to find me, and what then?"

It was Stephano's turn to flush. Serena saw him bite his lip impatiently etc. he returned:

"A great many things, dear child, probable and improbable."

"Did you expect to take me back with you, and where—to whom?"

"I hoped to do so, certainly. It was my father's earnest wish. You are a relative of ours, Leina, and it is my father's duty to order for you to protect you, if it be possible."

The great dimpled eyes deepened and widened.

"But my mother, my mother, and perhaps a father too—are they not waiting for me there?"

"Poor child, is that your dream?" spoke Stephano, in a voice of pitiful tenderness.

"But it is true—it must be true!" cried Leina, passionately. "I have dreamed it so many times, and of the great castle which is my home. I can describe it to you. I have stolen chances to peep beneath Theodosia's curtain many, and many a time. I know how grandly its turreted roof and noble towers rise up above the trees, and how it crowns the heights, looking down into the sleeping beauty of the river that washes its feet. You must not tell me all this is an empty dream, and not really, and truly waiting there."

"The castle is there, certainly, and you will be its mistress. No one will dispute your right," answered Stephano, still in that gentlest voice.

"But my mother," spoke the girl, tremulously, clasping both hands upon his arm.

"Dear cousin, your parents died when you were but a tiny babe. There was a sad and untimely fate. Do not seek to learn the history, now, for it makes us all shudder, even at this far date, to refer to it."

"No mother waiting?" sighed Leina. "Oh, I was so sure of a mother's heart throbbing yearningly with its longing for me. Oh, Serena, Serena, I do not care for the castle so much now!"

And she buried her face on her friend's shoulder and wept softly. Serena soothed her with many tender caresses and loving words.

"Such intuitions often mislead the heart, my darling. I myself have been strangely stirred and thrilled at times. I have seemed to feel her outreaching arms, to be sure my mother was near and calling for me; it was only the other night—the last night at home in

the cottage—that I sprang up from my sleep, stretching out my arms, thinking a mother's voice entreated me to come. Perhaps their angel spirits hover around us; and at times make their presence felt. Do not grieve so bitterly, my Leina. Some time we shall know our mothers. To the heavenly home we shall surely go and join them at last."

"Oh, Serena, Serena, if I were only as good as you," said Leina, sorrowfully. "I should not feel so much the lack of a mother's guiding hand. You must better leave me, Serena—must you, Stephano? You will take her with us when we go home to my castle, will you not?"

"I should be sorry indeed to leave her behind," answered Stephano, and a little sigh fluttered away with the words.

Leina presently brightened up and said, gaily:

"And the castle really exists? You called me cousin, Stephano. Is it really and truly so?"

"Enough to warrant the claim, somewhere in the third or fourth degree. And quite enough to give us a warm and earnest desire to secure your happiness and safety, little Leina," returned he. "Do you think you could venture to trust yourself in my care?"

She laid her hand confidently in his.

"Of course I do, my cousin; Serena trusts you, and I always know her judgments are wise and correct. Now tell me the rest."

"Nay," said Stephano, "I am not sure it would be wise to tell. Let Serena judge. Now that you are in ignorance you can truthfully deny this man the information he requires. If I tell you all the names and localities, what will you answer to his demands?"

"I see," answered Leina, promptly. "It will be much better for me to know nothing. After all just the name is but a title, while it is a great deal to know that my castle actually exists."

"Just at present even the castle is of little consequence," said Serena. "A key to unlock that cellar door is of more vital importance."

"You are already tired of this? It has grown dull and irksome already," spoke Stephano, in a low and slightly reproachful voice.

Serena coloured faintly.

"It is natural that I should wish to return to my grieving friends; I am moreover still more uneasy about Leina since I am assured of the important interests that attend her. I know that the Fosses were jealously watchful of any acquaintances she made."

"They are the paid hirelings to keep her existence secret until their master calls for her appearance," said Stephano, indignantly. "I had observed all I know about her before this; and Nat the taxidermist has given me his confidence."

"Nat?" exclaimed Serena. "Mr. Nathaniel? Ah, then I am sure it is all correct."

"And yet you look uneasy and grave," persisted Stephano.

Serena glanced across the room where Leina, mounted on a chair, was trying to peep through an aperture in the stout shutters.

"Do I?" she answered, listlessly. "I do not mean to. I am only thinking—wondering—"

"About what? Tell me about what you wonder?"

She turned her eyes toward him, smiled calmly in answer, steady fashion, and answered:

"I was wondering if you came, or were sent—to marry Leina."

The blood rushed hotly into Stephano's face.

She read at once the confirmation of her suspicion, and as if satisfied with the discovery turned away quietly.

But Stephano made a detaining gesture.

"Hold!" he said, softly, but in a voice full of passionate resolution. "Does it follow that because I came for that purpose I must continue in it when I find my heart turning another way? Do you think I will barter my happiness for wealth, honours, or even filial duty?"

Serena heard every word, but she joined Leina and appeared as if she had not understood his meaning. Mills's return compelled a forced silence on Stephano's part. Fortunately for the latter, Mills seemed to have no concern about the invalid. But as the day wore on, and Robinson failed to appear, the outcries of the prisoners grew seditious and uneasy, and mounted many times the rude stairs which led to a sort of loft where a powerful telescope was set, and sweeping its axis in the direction from which Robinson was expected to come, he muttered:

"He promised to make the signal. If he has got into trouble it will be as much as my neck is worth to get out of this scrape."

Night fell again, and the three prisoners looked at each other anxiously as the cheerful light failed, and the attempted smiles died off from their lips.

"Robinson has not returned, and no sign has come of any investigation on the part of your friends," said Stephano. "It is folly for me to delay the attempt to overpower this man! I ought to have

made sure of it during the daylight. It is not too dark yet for us to pick out our way."

"No, no," cried Leina, clinging to his arm; "he carries a pistol, and you have no weapon whatever."

"But I can find a dozen effective ones," he answered, firmly; "it is cowardly and hazardous for us to remain here another night with but one man for a jailer; if we mean to escape."

"But another desperate one is expected every moment," said Serena. "I think rather it would be unwise to run such a risk while we are kindly treated. Let us still make the best of the situation."

And they separated with good-nights as cordial and as friendly and familiar tones as if they had been members of the same family for years instead of acquaintances of a few hours.

Just after midnight they were aroused by a noisy pounding on the cellar door. The trembling maidens sprang up shivering with excitement, and listened intently.

"Nat, Nat, we are here," called Leina.

"You may call for Nat, but his fate is settled for him!" growled a surly voice, and the knocking was renewed, while Robinson's wrathful voice shouted for Mills.

Mills came shuffling along when Serena slid away the bolt on their side of the door, and gave him admittance, and producing the key unlocked the cellar door.

Robinson, bearing a large box, staggered by him, and dropped wearily upon the floor.

"Bring me some liquor; my strength is well beat out of me."

"What has been the matter?" demanded Mills, staring at the strange figure his flitting candle revealed, for Robinson's face was covered with blood and dirt, his clothing was torn, one eye terribly bruised, and his whole appearance shocking and revolting in the extreme.

"Bring me the liquor, I say," thundered he again, "and then go down to the cave and drag in the boat. When I'm ready to explain my doings to you you'll hear about them and not before."

Mills obeyed without another question.

Leina stood for a moment looking at him fiercely, and then she demanded, hotly:

"What did you say about Nat? What have you done to Nat?"

"Sent him to the bottomless pit, I hope," snarled Robinson. "Keep out of my way, if you know what's best for yourself. There won't be any more of Nat's meddling in anything going on in these parts."

"You are a wicked, shameful man," ejaculated Leina, stamping her foot in utter forgetfulness of her own dependence upon the man's good humour.

Serena drew her gently back, and at the same instant gave an imploring look to Stephano, who had started up as fiercely.

"You do not mean, you cannot mean, that you have added the foulest of all crimes to your already sin-stained soul," she said, sorrowfully.

A sudden resistance took the place of the malignant glare of his eyes as he returned:

"I left him stretched out on the beach. Do you think I would bear these bruises, the infernal choking he gave me and not to do my best to return?"

Serena's white lips whitened as she returned:

"Unhappy man! what will comfort your remorse when your own hour approaches? You have murdered one of my trust and tenderest friends. And yet if you wish I will bind up those wounds."

"I want no help. Go back to your room. I am in a dangerous temper to-night, and you had best keep out of my way," he answered, sulkily.

The two girls crept back to their beds, slipping the bolt behind them, and, clinging to each other with many tears, bewailed the terrible fate of their old and faithful friend, as well as mourned the longer postponement of their own hopes of escape.

A week of anxious and uncomfortable experience followed this appearance of Jack. He remained with them nearly all the time, attending with much care to the healing of his bruises, and watching by means of his glass for the slightest movement in the direction of his hiding-place, but never once venturing himself outside the house, although Mills was sent twice, once with a letter over which Robinson had spent a perplexed and painful hour, after searching through the parcel of letters found in the box he had brought with him.

He did not intrude a great deal of his society upon the captive, but he had a way of coming in silently and suddenly, which quite destroyed their ease and security.

They all suspected that he had detected the ruse which passed off Stephano as still too weak and ill to be of any service to the prisoners, but concluded that he was willing to save himself any farther harm as possible. For, while he never questioned them, or seemed to be particularly watchful either Mills or himself was kept constantly within hearing of every movement.

Thus one day when Stephano had whispered to Leina: "That box he brought belongs to Mr. Nathaniel; I remember it well. It contains important papers in a secret drawer. Try and find the drawer if you can, and get the papers," and Leina had lightly approached the table where the writing-desk stood, Robinson came in quickly, and with a loud laugh shouldered the box and carried it out into the inner room where he slept.

Again one day he burst in upon them suddenly, pistol in hand, and demanded that they should follow him without a word of complaint, or a single attempt at resistance, and Mills was sarcastically requested to pick up the invalid, unless he was able to walk himself—which hint Stephano took and stood up.

The three were marched down into the cellar through the cunningly contrived secret door, and into the underground passage, where Robinson stood guard over them nearly an hour and a half, at the expiration of which time Mills returned, and gave some sort of sign to his leader, who calmly took up the line of return march.

The prisoners guessed what it meant.

A party had come searching over the place, and they judged by the disordered, uninhabited look that Mills must have managed to produce that the same party had been allowed to look into the house, and had departed.

Though the doors were securely fastened a shutter was open that had been hitherto closed. Leina rushed forward to this window, and saw a boat with two or three men in it just disappearing from view.

She stretched out her arms with a wild cry.

But Robinson laughed uproariously.

"Now we shall be left in peace!" he said. "They've satisfied themselves that the Haunted House doesn't hold anything of the dainty flesh and blood they're searching for. The idiots were half scared to death in broad daylight for fear of the ghosts."

Serena burst into a passion of angry tears.

"Don't be impatient, my beauty. You'll get away in good time, the quicker the better for me, so I get the round sum in gold I ask for such a pretty creature," he said, in a sort of rough kindness of voice.

(To be continued.)

THE FORTUNES OF BRAMBLETHORPE.

CHAPTER VIII.

It is a well-known fact that old widowers do not like long engagements. The earl wished to limit his to two months.

This rendered it necessary to make the fact of his intended marriage known in the family within a day or two after his understanding with Estelle. She was quite willing that the courtship should be brief. Despite her many resources, she could not feel quite sure of the coronet until it was on her brow. But as she desired a splendid *trousseau* and gay wedding, it could hardly be accomplished in less time.

It was with a sense of shame, which annoyed him even while he felt it, that the earl set about explaining to his son that "he thought of lessening his loneliness—of filling Augusta's place," etc., etc.; and he was immensely relieved when Harry broke in on his embarrassment, saying, not unkindly, but still with a very faint attempt at a smile:

"I understand what you would tell me, father. Estelle has already confided your mutual intentions to me."

"Oh, has she? I thought the little minx would be too shy."

The young man gave the elder one a sort of compassionate look which said plainly as words: "How can he be so deceived?" but his lips were silent and the other was blind to his expression.

"I suppose you think I am old enough to have outgrown sentiment," added the earl, a little vexed at the other's silence, and not feeling too well convinced of his own wisdom. "I do not feel that Estelle can ever take the place in my heart sacred to—your—dear and honoured—mother, Harry; but I am lonely. You and your sisters have your own interests separate from mine. I have not been as well as usual this summer, which makes me feel my loneliness more than ever, and that I need some one who—"

He paused, and his son observed:

"I am sorry, father, if we have appeared remiss in our affectionate duty to you."

"You have not. I do not say that. Better children never lived. Estelle is good and affectionate. She is too pretty and too brilliant to waste all her bloom on that Rectory. I have always felt that she was one of us; and the surest way to keep her so is to

give her the title of my wife. She, poor child, loves me fondly."

Something very like disgust trembled about Lord Harry's lips, but he repressed it, saying, in a low voice:

"I hope so, father."

"You have no reason to doubt it?" said the earl, a little testily.

The young man felt tempted to tell him the whole truth; it mortified as well as distressed him to see the dignified parent whom he had always treated with reverence made game of by that wily, unprincipled girl; but he recalled her threats, and, remarking how much better and happier the earl had looked since his engagement, he felt loth to fling back upon him the burden of fear and care which had weighed so heavily.

"Estelle has more strength of character than most girls of her age," continued the earl, anxious to defend his position. "She has spirit and dignity enough for the situation; and she really professes a man of my age and experience to one of you pretty fellows," he added, laughingly.

"She has, indeed, plenty of will and firmness," responded Harry, seeing that he could say nothing else.

"She is a girl of a thousand!" said the new-old lover, enthusiastically.

As the earl went out of the room after this ardent remark Estelle glided from behind the curtains of the bay-window, an arch smile on her face, her eyes sparkling with mischief.

"They say eavesdroppers never hear any good of themselves," she cried, gaily. "What a mistake, Lord Harry! However, I was in the window quite by accident; and after you brought me on the carpet I felt a little awkward about coming out. Your congratulations were not quite as warm as they might have been! Still, under the circumstances, I excuse you, and give you credit for having used considerable discretion. We shall be friends yet."

She followed after the earl, as cool and bright as possible, leaving Lord Harry, well as he understood her, astonished at her imperturbable effrontery.

Just then Perkins had occasion to pass through the room. She saw trouble on her young master's brow, and the swelling torrent which she had with difficulty pent in her heart all day burst out:

"Excuse me, my lord, but he is true?"

"What?" he asked, with a forlorn smile.

"That she have bewitched the earl at his age."

"I believe my father intends to marry, if that is what you mean."

"Marry and welcome! but her! You don't pretend to say you like it, Lord Harry?"

"It's none of my business—nor yours, Perkins."

"I know it, my lord, and I humbly asks your pardon. But I nussed you when you was a baby, my dear, and it cuts me down to 'ave to leave this family."

"Leave it, Perkins?"

"Ay! Before ever that wedding comes off, sir. I couldn't stand it to stay here, and be 'under her thumb. Nor I won't. That cat! I begs your pardoning again, humbly. I'm sure, which my feelings is too much for me. But I've seen her tricks since she was little. I've seen her in the earl's own private chambers and he not at home—there!"

Her listener started.

"When?"

He did not like to encourage the gossip of the housekeeper, but he was too deeply interested to refuse such knowledge as might come to him through this channel.

"Only the very day before we left Bramblethorpe Villa, my lord. An' she a portendin' to fix her hair, while she crept like a cat into your own father's room, an' I a standin' in the shadow of the long passage an' seed her go in an' come out."

"Had she anything in her hand, Perkins?"

"No; but that's no sign. Women folks have places to hide small things. Howsoever, I don't go to insinuate that Miss Estelle would take anything—Heaven, no! But if she wanted to read or see or peep you needn't tell me she be too nice for it."

"It may have been quite an accident. She may have run in for something—or just out of curiosity about the furniture—some trifle. You must not make too much of it, Perkins."

"Oh, I don't. I know enough to hold my tongue when I've got to. But I don't like her for a mistress and I shall leave."

"Well, at least Augusta will be glad to have you when she sets up housekeeping," said the amiable young gentleman, not at all blaming Perkins for her prejudices, in which he secretly shared most heartily.

"But keep the peace now, if you please. We need not always say all we think."

"That's so. What can't be cured must be endured. Still I don't see as the milk's spilled yet; and I can't help a wishing somethink would 'appen to disappoint

Miss Styles. To think of the earl bein' made a witness to the harts and wiles—but these, 'tain't for me to interfere—no, not if he walks straight into the fire. I shan't open my mouth, my dear, no, not if the world comes to an end. But you understand that I leave afore she has a chance to discharge me."

And Perkins procured the article for which she entered the room and went on her way.

The unpleasantness of the earl's part was not all over when he had come to an understanding with his son, he had yet to communicate the intelligence of his approaching marriage to his daughters.

He had tried to persuade Estelle to make the revelation to them; but it is an actual fact, however unaccountable, that she shrank from doing this.

It seemed to her that the clear eyes of those innocent girls would look straight through into her guileful heart, and that she could not endure the first test of their surprised glances.

So she had shirked the ordeal, with such a pretty and blushing grace that the earl was more than ever charmed with her maiden shyness.

"Your feelings shall be spared, my dear," he had said, when she had avowed her reluctance. "I will tell them. After all, I am proud of the news, little witch."

He may have been proud of it, but that did not prevent the dignified lord from being slightly abashed under the gaze of astonishment directed at him by his two fair daughters.

"Estelle," cried Augusta, when she had regained her breath. "How strange, papa!"

"The most natural choice I could make, darling. I do not know that I should have thought of such a thing, however, if you had not set me the example, Augusta," and he laughed, pinching her cheek. "How do you suppose I relish the prospect of being left here alone, after the young birds have all flown from the parent nest?"

"I am sure I am left to you, papa," murmured Clara, and that was all the reproach she ventured to utter.

Indeed, after they had had time to consider the matter, the young ladies were far less vexed than one might think.

If their father thought at all of marriage, better their dear cousin Estelle than a stranger. They liked her, and they were too generous and too amiable to suspect her of the base ambition which regulated her actions.

"Well," said Augusta, rather slowly, "I am glad it is Estelle, papa," and she kissed him. "I suppose we must find her and congratulate her."

With a certain gravity of demeanour the two young girls moved away in search of their cousin.

They were thinking of their dead mother; also, they were affected, against their own consciousness, by a sense of the incongruity of the match.

They were very grave when they came into Estelle's chamber, where she had taken refuge. They saw her with her face hidden in the pillow of her bed, and she raised it as they stood beside her, covered with blushes and tears.

"Don't scold me, girls," she said, tremulously. "He said that I could make him happier, and I loved him so!"

Their warm young hearts melted, and they said softly, "We did not come to scold you," said Augusta, softly. "If papa must have a wife we prefer you to any other. But we had never thought of his marrying again."

"Nor I," added Estelle, demurely, "until he asked me. The matter is not settled yet. I told him that I would not marry him unless you were all willing. Not if—it broke my heart!"

"Don't cry, my pet," said Clara, and she kissed her. "And you really love him?" murmured Augusta, with feminine interest and curiosity getting the better of her first surprise.

"Yes, indeed. How could I help it? There's some disparity in our ages, that is true, but you know there is not a handsomer, or more agreeable, or better man in the whole of England."

"Papa is awfully nice," said Clara. "I did not wonder that Lady Strathmore should show that she was in love with him. But you, Estelle, have been like a daughter to him. Lady Strathmore has a hundred and fifty thousand pounds in her own right—yet papa wouldn't fancy her."

"And I have nothing. It will tax my father's means to their limit to furnish the *trousseau* which I mean to have. You are kind to remind me of it, Clara! I'm like the beggar maid that came to King Cophetua."

"I did not mean that, Estelle. Papa has money enough for both. We like you, and that is the main point."

Thus the generous young ladies tried to be glad that their cousin was their father's fiancée.

But it took them longer to recover from their sur-

prise and to become reconciled than appeared on the surface.

Their soft hearts and gentle breeding prompted them to hide a certain restless dissatisfaction, which they could not but feel, however little they could explain the cause.

It may have owed its origin almost entirely to something in their brother's face, which he never expressed in words, and from the dry, prim silence of the old housekeeper, who "looked volumes," but never said anything for or against, nor manifested any interest in the exciting details of the bride's trousseau.

Mrs. Perkins had expressed herself to Lord Harry, because she had long seen that he disliked his cousin, but she was too wise to go babbling indiscriminately.

Meanwhile Lord Harry had something of far more importance to think of than even his father's marriage.

Day after day of that fatal week rolled slowly away—so long in the enduring—so terribly swift after they had passed over!

For each one of them brought nearer the time when Agnes MacLeod was to go home with MacLeod of Melrose as his wife.

Pride and wounded love kept the young lord from seeking a farewell interview or contravening her decision.

That she could make such a decision was what so keenly surprised and disappointed him. Had he been in her place he would have laughed the unloved woe to scorn, and have turned radiantly to his true and real choice. How could Agnes—his ideal of pure womanhood—give her hand, unhallowed by her heart? It was to him a far greater, crueler, more lasting sin and wrong than to disappoint a man who was ungenerously taking advantage of her forced promise to a dying father to hurry her into a dreaded marriage.

Lord Harry did not give sufficient weight to the influences under which Agnes had been reared. Taught to consider loyalty to her race and to her word as dearer than life itself, her gentle will overpowered by the fiercer will of her obstinate cousin, the more faithfully she suffered in contemplation of the sacrifice she was about to make the more certain she felt that she was only doing her duty.

The girl had passed a week even more full of suffering than had Lord Harry. She had had not only her own heart to contend with but the anger and determined opposition of her aunt, to whom she had declared her purpose of fulfilling her long engagement with James by marrying him on the following Wednesday and returning with him to Scotland. Mrs. MacLeod was about equally grieved and wrathful. That yellow-haired, broad-shouldered, and free-spoken lady was not accustomed to have her wishes thus thwarted. The most vigorous Scotch dialect she could summon to her assistance was not of powerful enough to express her astonishment and displeasure that her niece should "throw overboard" an earl's son, a prospective coronet, wealth unbounded, and the chance of becoming the reigning London beauty, and all for that grim old bachelor incarnation of selfishness, of whom the only good thing that could be said was that he was a MacLeod of Melrose.

"Go, starve!" she almost shouted, when the terrible Wednesday at last came round, and Agnes, pale, with red eyelids, came out of her room about ten in the morning, dressed in a plain gray travelling-suit, and told her maid to direct the porter upstairs for her trunks.

A hack, drawn up in front of the house, awaited the baggage, noon driving it away to the station to await the half-past twelve express out of London.

"Go, starve, ungrateful lass," cried Mrs. MacLeod, so that all the servants heard, getting near half-opened doors to listen. "Starve on your bare old hills that will nae pasture a sheep. 'Tis the sheep alone you'll have to stare at your handsome face after this, I can tell ye." Begone, with your canny Jamie, as perfect a picture of a ladies' non as heart can desire! Much joy I wish you with the pleasant lad whose obstinacy sticks out like the bones in his big body—a lovely bridegroom for my niece, who might ha' been the belle of the world, were she not a little idiot. Go, since you will, and dinna ye ever set foot over my threshold again, let what will happen! Ye are a high-strung, self-willed creature, Heaven knows, and you're cruelly disappointed me. Ha! If there isn't James on the pavement this moment! He dare nae come in!" she half-chuckled, half cried. "He dare nae! He knows better."

"After what you said to him, aunt, he will not," responded Agnes, standing at the foot of the stairs, nervously playing with the veil in her hand, while great tears coursed slowly and unheeded down her cheeks.

A footman was holding the door open, waiting for

her to pass out; her maid had already gone down to the carriage with some packages, and was waiting to take her seat inside with her mistress—poor Agnes's only attendant—for the implacable old lady would not go to the church to witness the sacrifice of her pride and hope.

The expectant bridegroom stood by the carriage door; nothing could have induced him to put his tall head again under his relative's roof.

"Do look at the mon an' his establishment," cried the irate aunt. "The same clo'es he's worn the last two years—a shabby old vehicle, a shabby old driver, and a pair o' steeds that might ha' drawn Noah's ark. Weel, weel, Agnes, I wish you all the joy you're likely to have!"

"Oh, aunt, what are such trifles?" whispered the bride-elect, earnestly. "I am thinking of weightier matters. Oh, if that were all! Aunt, aunt, will you not kiss me good-bye?"

A pair of soft arms were about her neck, a pair of blue eyes, swimming in tears, glistened near her own, a pair of sweet lips were pressed to hers, and before the softened aunt could murmur "Farewell, then, darling," Agnes had run down the steps.

Mrs. MacLeod scarcely knew whether such words had actually been said, but there was an echo in her ears and heart as if Agnes had whispered—"My heart is breaking."

She rushed to the door, with an impulse to drag the foolish girl back by main force; but the vehicle was already in motion, and all she saw was a gleam of triumph from the blue eyes of James, and the bridal party was gone.

With a groan and a sob which would struggle up through her anger, she turned back into her lonesome house.

Had she remained at her door a moment longer she might have witnessed something of a little scene which transpired just then.

Before it had moved a rod from its place the carriage passed an equestrian, who was coming slowly from the opposite direction.

Lord Harry Bramblethorpe, not positive as to the day of the expected marriage, but inferring that it might be this, could no longer resist the pressure of suspense. Pride gave way before a more powerful passion.

Driven by his restlessness to horseback exercise, that bright June morning, he had, after roving about for a couple of hours, finally decided to call at Mrs. MacLeod's, in a faint hope of seeing Agnes once again—and, perchance, persuading her even yet to change her resolution.

As he came in sight of the house he remarked the travelling-carriage in front of it, the maid, the giant form of the Scotch laird on the pavement, and his soul had sunk with an inference of the truth.

Continuing slowly to advance, his dimmed sight was aware of a light figure coming down the steps and being handed into the vehicle by that man.

In two or three moments more they passed him—the bridal pair.

Agnes, pale as a ghost, staring from the window on her side, saw him as he went by. She saw a face as white as her own, hardened, as it were, into marble, by despair.

She saw the young man so strong, so beautiful, press his hand suddenly to his side as if an arrow had entered it.

No more!—not a look of recognition, not a bow—only a proud young rider, cantering by, with a white face, set like stone.

Involuntarily she turned to her companion. "He, too, had seen the rider, and as he met her eyes he smiled. That smile cost him dear. It was an ungenerous smile, for it exulted over a rival whom he could well afford, in his hour of triumph, to commiserate. It stung Agnes like an adder. All in an instant from being sorrowful she became indignant. Her spirit rose up in her to resent the wound to that unhappy young man who could not defend himself against it.

It was she who had placed Lord Harry in this humiliating position! She who had enabled his rival to smile in his face! A complete revulsion came over her feelings. She hated this man by her side. Hitherto she had respected and pitied him, although nature rebelled against loving him. She replied to his broad smile with a curious look—a look which seemed to tell him how she disliked his huge person, his rude manners, his selfish claims—how she delighted in the fine beauty, the grace, the chivalry of that glorious young lord at whom he had had the audacity to sneer! He was startled by her expression, yet too confident now of his own happiness to ponder it as thoroughly as he might.

James MacLeod had to learn a strange lesson of the perversity of womankind on that morning. He sat by her side, placid in the fulness of his content; he almost forgot that they had passed an unhappy rival. Meantime a change had come over the girl

by his side. The tears were dried in her blazing eyes, her pale cheeks were scarlet, her breast heaved high with the struggling passion within.

Her maid, sitting opposite, was watching her curiously. Mary had been with her young mistress since the latter was a child, and knew pretty clearly how matters stood. She had perceived the change to which MacLeod of Melrose was as yet calmly blind.

Agnes's well-controlled spirit had at last taken fire. As men had dreamed and said, when looking at her great beauty, so calm and girl-like, "There was an ardent, a grand woman within that exquisite statue when the right touch came to awaken her."

The right touch had fallen now, and her soul flamed into her eyes.

James might have placed his large foot on her neck and she would not have resisted, but to fling that smile at poor, pale Lord Harry, whose heart she was breaking!—all at once the feminine instinct sprang to the protection of the one it loved.

It was but a brief distance to the church, where a Scottish minister was in readiness to marry them according to the Presbyterian ceremony. Already they were turning into the street.

Agnes leaned forward and spoke to the driver over the maid's shoulder, who at once turned off the street and continued on down the main avenue beyond.

"Ha! the fellow's ganging all wrong!" cried James, waking up to a sense that something was amiss. "Stupid fellow!" he roared, looking out of the window, "that's not the way to the kirk."

"I told him to drive directly to the station," said Agnes, quietly.

"You—told—him!" stammered the astonished laird. "And wherefore?"

"Because," said the young lady, turning on the seat so as to confront him, her face beaming with light and glowing with passion, "I will never marry you, Cousin James, never!"

He gazed at her, mouth and eyes open in utter surprise.

"You'll never marry me?" he at length said.

"Never! I have changed my mind since I entered this coach."

"An' weel I know what's changed it!" roared the laird; "that pretty face that went by a moment ago! D'ye think, lassie, to cajole me like this? There's no woman living can do it! Drive back to the kirk, ye scoundrel! Where are ye going?" he thundered at the puzzled coachman, who, thinking he must have mistaken the lady's orders, again obediently turned and drove into the street in which stood the church.

"You will only make a scene in public. You cannot force me to marry you against my will," remarked Agnes, cool and firm.

"I'll see if I canna. I'll drag thee before the minister, and find if he will nae make thee repeat thy shameful conduct."

"Oh! very well," responded the lady. "I've no objections to explaining myself to the good minister. Milly, you stay by me."

"That I will, miss."

Milly had secretly been "awful sorry" to lose the bright prospect of a life in town; she had thought Lord Harry a little more than perfection itself. A gorgeous castle-in-air had tumbled into utter ruin when she received word to go back to Scotland; therefore she was now inwardly intensely delighted, if a little frightened.

(To be continued.)

SHIELD QUARTERINGS.—In right of his descent from heiresses the present Duke of Athole has a shield of more than a thousand quarterings. As a set-off against this accumulation of heiresses combined in the possessor of one Scotch dukedom, it is a curious circumstance that another Scotch duke, Montrose, is the representative of ancestors quite as illustrious—courtiers and cavaliers *par excellence*—not one of whom, from their first appearance in history, found favour with an heiress. Consequently the Graham shield has no quartering.

A BAD MEMORY.—There was once a good old lady whose age affected her in little else than in her memory. She had forgotten nearly all her past life, and could not remember the names of her nearest relations. But she never acknowledged it, and, being very sensitive on the point, end-avoured, in all sorts of crafty ways, to conceal her weakness in this respect. One day an old friend called on her, and the name of her first husband, a Mr. Jacob Peters, was mentioned. The old lady pricked up her ears and tried to look knowing. To save her life she could not remember who Mr. Peters was.

EDUCATION IN DENMARK.—The little kingdom of Denmark is displaying a zeal in furthering education which might well be imitated by richer and more extensive countries. Compulsory and gratuitous education has existed in the country since the beginning

of this century, but the government are of opinion that farther progress is necessary. Accordingly, M. Hall, the Minister of Education, will this session introduce a bill which will make attendance at school compulsory up to the fifteenth year. A special school will be established for such pupils as wish to continue their studies beyond this age.

ELGIVA;

OR, THE GIPSY'S CURSE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Snapt Link," "Evelyn's Plot," "Sybil's Inheritance," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Is constant love deemed there but want of wit?
Are beauties there as proud as here they be?
Do they above love to be loved, and yet
Their lovers scorn when they that love possess?
Do they call virtue there ingratitude?

"LADY AMICE, may I trouble you to repeat those words in my presence—I should say, my acknowledged and recognized presence?" said Lord Easton as he confronted the embarrassed yet haughty heiress, after a pause that succeeded his unexpected entrance on the scene.

Amice hesitated for a few moments, ere she replied.

It was difficult to decide whether she should assume the defiant tone that so well accorded with her scornful, haughty nature, or attempt in a measure to tamper and avert the storm that hung over her.

"I think," she replied, with a rather futile effort at a smile, "I think that it can scarcely be incumbent on any one to yield to the request of an eavesdropper, Lord Easton. If my words were overheard, in a connection that would probably alter their meaning, it is not for me to supply the deficiency. I am ready and willing to account for words and actions that are serious and open, but I will not encourage treachery, even in a friend."

"Say rather a betrothed lover, a future husband, Lady Amice," returned the marquis, coldly. "I sincerely think it will give this noble foreigner a favourable idea of English manners when he hears that such a sacred relationship is openly denied, and, as it seems to me, denied."

The prince shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I certainly have heard much of the enigmas of your English mode of betrothal, but I never even supposed it would amount to such open scandal before a foreigner and stranger. It is not for me to doubt the word of a lady, monsieur," he added, with a mocking bow to the young heiress. "And far be it from me even to imagine that an honourable nobleman could be guilty of a baseness. Therefore, I have no alternative but to retire and leave you to your explanations," he continued, quitting the apartment as he spoke. "Ah, they manage these things better abroad," he muttered as he retired.

"We could have no such imbroglis there." Perhaps as he mingled with the throng he repeated the opinion of the foreigner who declared that nothing should induce him to marry an English girl, with the chance of her having had a dozen or so of previous flirtations or engagements.

Meanwhile the pair he had left regarded each other with anything but friendly eyes.

"Now that we are alone, Amice, I presume you can have no objection to retracting your insinuation," said Lord Easton, sternly. "You knew in your inmost heart that I was not playing the odious part you assigned to me. I did but avail myself of the privilege I have ever enjoyed as your accepted suitor, and entered the apartment from the private passage, which unhappily, or it perhaps may be happily for my honour, you forgot. Now that I have stooped to give the explanation you have perhaps some right to demand, Amice, I insist on your candour in return. What did—what could your words imply, save that you dislike and disown your engagement to me? Can you explain them otherwise? I will give you that one chance," he added, sternly. "Speak. There should be no such doubtfulness in confessing the truth."

But Amice did not reply for a brief moment.

"You are so hasty, so inconsiderate," she said. "I—that is, you—cannot wish our engagement to be proclaimed all over the town, and I be pointed at as a betrothed bride. It is utterly useless, absurd in my judgment."

"Not so, Amice, not so," returned Lord Easton, firmly. "There has been too much of this evasion and—shall I say juggling?—already. I will have no farther trifling with the honest and genuine affection I have lavished on you. Yes, Amice," he went on, "I have surely some claim on your gratitude and honour. Have you forgotten when I first bestowed on you my love, when I laid at your feet my hand, my title and fortune, even while you were yet a portionless and as I now know a nameless girl?"

Yet I chose you from a crowd who were rivals for my notice, and would gladly have accepted the coronet and the fortune I had to bestow. It was to Amice, not the heiress, I gave my heart, and I have a claim on her that few could urge. I will be answered, once and for all," he went on. "Are you prepared to arrange at once for the wedding, and to acknowledge and appear only in the character of my betrothed bride?"

"And if not?" she asked, scornfully.

"Then I shall at once withdraw my suit, and let it be publicly known that I am amply justified in so doing."

A blaze of anger flashed from Amice's large eyes. "It is intolerable," she exclaimed, "that you or any one should dare to speak thus to me, who could have all London at my feet, with every freedom that woman can possess. This infamous! unbearable! Leave me, my lord. Your boasted claims are certainly not superior—no, nor equal to mine. If there be loss, it certainly will not be on my part. From this hour all is at an end between us. I am thankful to be rid of the bond that has weighed so heavily on me."

There was ineffable scorn in her tone as she spoke the words, and Lord Easton's indignation was fairly roused.

"Ungrateful, heartless girl!" he said. "There will yet be a day of retribution in my judgment for one who so wantonly throws aside what is the dearest and the least easily purchased possession of women. Perhaps ere long you may learn to repent having trampled upon a heart and flung it away as a worthless thing."

Without giving her time to reply he opened the door and retired through the same private apartments he had so unwelcomely entered.

Amice remained for a brief moment in mingled anger and mortification.

She had missed her mark. The prey had escaped which she had risked all to catch, and the brilliant position that had been hers beyond power of failure or fate to change was lost for ever.

Yes, she could at any rate comprehend that Lord Easton had gone past her.

He had broken his chains, and all attempt to draw him again within her power would be hopeless, and in vain.

There was a strange chill at her heart as she felt this sudden freedom, and with a suspicion that might be pardoned at the moment she left the apartment and retired without excuse or permission from the gay scene.

Ah, it could not but contrast with that first miserable ball at Chetwode, when she had met and captivated him who had thus escaped from her net.

Then she had escaped to the mysterious shelter of Marian Oliver's room, and heard from her at once the encouragement of her hopes and the warning to obey her behest if she would attain the goal.

The prophecy had been fulfilled thus far; would it be true to the end?

There was a strange dreariness in the scene at any rate, and Amice literally started when she perceived Marian seated with her accustomed imperturbable dignity beside the blazing fire that the chill night made acceptable.

"You here!" exclaimed Amice, angrily. "Am I never to be free from your hateful presence, even in my own apartments, and at this hour? I am weary and would be alone. Leave me, I beg, and let me rest."

Marian had risen with an air of outward respect as the heiress entered. But as usual she remained perfectly imperturbable to aught but her own will and pleasure and did not even attempt to obey the command.

"I would willingly give up the mission which is on me," she said, with a strange, mournful air; "but it is not to be yet—not yet, though I believe the time is not far distant. Lady Amice, I am here to ask what could induce you to act so madly but a brief time since, and to refuse the hand that I have told you again and again was your only safeguard to accept."

"Because I chose to follow my own inclinations," said the girl, impatiently. "And assuredly if I, the heiress of this domain, cannot take my own course, when the meekest and the most obscure are permitted such liberty—"

"Because so little hangs on their choice," said Marian, sadly, "while in your case the fate of an ancient name and broad land is at stake, and the plans of long years—are affected by your folly. Lady Amice, I have warned you in vain, and the end is at hand. You have proved unworthy of your birth and your station, and another will be placed in the high position you have so ill merited."

"Another?" said Amice, angrily. "Are you mad, woman? Have you dared to play any juggling tricks, and put up a puppet at your pleasure? You have sworn, ay, and brought proof upon proof that I am indeed Amice, daughter of the deceased Count Arnheim, instead of that hated girl. Do you dare to deny it now?"

"No," replied Marian. "I do not. You are the child of that weak and misguided man and of his dead wife. Still you are not heiress of Chetwode nor Lady of Arnheim."

"Then he—Juan—is alive?" exclaimed the girl, eagerly.

"No; but another, whose existence is not even yet suspected, who is assigner of her birth as of her own glorious qualities, is prior to you, proud girl, in her claim on the title and estates you hold. And in the words of the Holy Book, whose precepts I have but too little learnt—too little kept—you will have your heritage taken from you to be given to one better than thou."

"It is a false juggle—a hideous imposition," said the girl, angrily.

"It is truth, Lady Amice, and so you will find to your cost. I have warned you in vain, I have watched and hoped and waited. Your day is over—your chance gone. You have dared your fate."

"And who—what is this pretended heiress?" said Amice, striving to preserve her scornful tone. "You forget, Marian, that I know too much of the family story to be so easily deceived. Next to Juan—I mean to Ludovic, Earl of Chetwode—came my father in direct heirship, and I am his only child. Is it not so?"

"Yes, you are his only child," but then Oscar, Count Arnheim, had children, and that is the mystery you cannot comprehend as yet," answered Marian. "Those that deprived the unfortunate count of his son were too determined in their work to leave him the comfort of a daughter. And that daughter has been brought up in the school of adversity that has matured her noble character and purged the stain of her descent from her heart. She has suffered nobly—needlessly—she has displayed the courage without the evil passions of her race; and she will at length reap her reward."

"And where is she—this wonderful angel of perfection?" sneered Amice, determined to preserve the tone she had assumed, albeit her heart was like ice within her breast.

"It matters not. She will be forthcoming at the right time, and that time, at hand; you have hastened it by your own folly, and even brought this punishment on your head by the—"

"Hint for what—for what? Why should it be your caprice that I should marry Lord Easton?" said Amice, defiantly. "The whole thing is monstrous—incredible—a mere trick."

"I will tell you this much, Lady Amice," returned Marian, calmly. "The curse that has long rested on your house came from one cause, which seems to have been a heritage in the family to its bitter end. Oscar, Count Arnheim, betrayed a girl who, though he knew it not, was surrounded by safeguards such as princes could not safely defy; and then he chose to wed one whose birth, if not more ancient, was at least more noble than his victim. And the child on whom the curse was pronounced might even have avoided his fate had he been docile to the wedding prepared for him. And Elgiva, good and generous and noble as she is, incurred her penalty from like obstinacy. You have followed in the train. It remains to be seen whether the real heiress of the Chetwodes will display as fatal a perversity of will. Now farewell, Lady Amice. You can scarcely complain of your fate, since it was entirely brought on by your own vain coquetry and pride."

"Stop, stop!" exclaimed the girl, eagerly. "This is a wild tale, that will have to be proved before keener judges than myself. Those who have been left my guardians by my father's will are not likely to accept such an improbable story at your pleasure. I am an idiot even to listen to such ravings."

"Time will prove," said Marian, calmly. "There may be some delay. The sword may hang over your head yet a brief space. But if you would delay its fall abate in from the slightest repetition of this caprice. The instant one thought of breaking off your betrothal crosses your mind the whole truth shall be made public, till then, for others' sakes, it will be kept in its present mystery."

She quitted the apartment as she spoke, leaving the girl in a state of indignation, distress, and alarm that might well alone for even the long series of vanity, pride and selfishness that had marked her career.

CHAPTER L.

The fabric of bliss to its centre may fall,

But patience shall never depart.

While the vanishing phantoms of love and

delight

Abandon my soul like a dream of the night,

And leave but a desert behind.

It was on the afternoon of a beautiful September day, when the setting sun was gilding the massive forests that richly wooded the sides of a range of hills on which stood the noble Castle of Antrecht, and the whispering breezes sighed softly as if to lull the slumber, that a large, roomy carriage

with six stout Flemish horses wound slowly up its difficult ascent. Its arrival was evidently looked for; there were figures on the battlements gazing earnestly for the approach of the vehicle, and as it came near the entrance the massive gates were thrown open and the door of the more modern part of the mansion was unbolts, while several domestics and retainers stood in readiness for the reception of the new guests.

Still there was an unusual silence among them very different from the sort of joyous hum and bustle that pervades such a scene in English mansions. And as the carriage stopped and the inmates were revealed to view the cause of this hushed quiet might be comprehended.

A wasted female figure, that was evidently in the last stages of slow decline, was lifted tenderly from the cushioned seats by the strong arms of a powerful man who accompanied her, and carried with apparent ease and rapidity into the hall. She was followed by two women, of different ages and appearances, but both evidently united in anxious love and care for the sufferer.

"It is but just in time we have arrived, Lena," observed Marian Oliver as she guided her young companion through the stately hall up a wide stone staircase that led to the most modern wing of the building. "She is near her end now. But she could scarcely have died in peace save in this castle, and these are those who are bound to be present at her last moments who could not have been brought with safety from the spot."

Lena only bowed her head in assent. She could but wait and submit as she had done for many a long, weary day, and then, when her task was done, she might assert her liberty and claim repose and freedom.

The apartment in which Harold Esario—for it was he—had carried the unfortunate Tessa was a massive oak-panelled room with rich hangings and carved furniture, and illuminated by a blazing fire and the light of lamps in various parts of the chamber.

The invalid was laid on a large couch by the cheerful hearth on pillows that seemed to have been arranged by some loving and skilful hand. But for some moments she appeared too utterly exhausted to take heed of the scene around her.

After the cautious administration of some stimulating cordial by Lena's loving hands she suddenly opened her eyes and gazed round with a look of more intelligence than had hitherto appeared in her still lovely but vacant countenance.

"Where am I?" she exclaimed. "Is it a dream? Yet all is so clear. Oh, help me, help me, Harold, Harold. Take me from him. Save me from myself."

Harold approached her with a saddened yet soft air.

"Is it so?" he said. "Do you repent? Do you cling to me, your first, your only true love? Tessa," he murmured, bending over her, "is it really so? Do you return to him to whom you once promised love and truth?"

A cry broke from her, a cry of mingled gladness and agony, and she nestled in the arms he placed under her like a wounded dove.

"Oh, Harold, forgive me! I see all now. It was a dream, a wicked dream. I am yours. I have suffered—yes, but I deserved all."

Marian approached as if to calm the tempest of feeling that might be fatal to the sufferer.

"Tessa, my sister," she murmured, "compose yourself; you are among those you love and who love you. Thank Heaven, your senses have returned to know the truth, to receive your husband's pardon and forgiveness, and to bless your child."

"My child!" gasped the invalid, eagerly, "is she—that angel—my blessed child?"

She stretched out her hand to Lena's agitated clasp.

"No, not so, Tessa. She has claims on your love as well as gratitude that will be presently made known, but she came from a far different race. Your daughter is lovely and sweet and brave, and she has proved herself true and self-sacrificing as this noble girl. Wait and I will bring her to you."

Marian disappeared for a moment beyond a door near the couch, and returned ere the suspense could be well realized with the young, cable-draped figure of Elgiva, led by her impelling hand.

"Elgiva," she said, gently, "bend to your parents. They came of ancient and pure blood, as noble in its source as that which flows in the race you believed your own. There may be brighter days for you than you would ever have known as the daughter of Arnheim, and you will appreciate them better than the petted child of prosperity could know. Harold, Tessa, bless and love your noble and much-tried child."

Elgiva advanced with doubting, trembling steps to the couch, the sufferer's eyes fastened as it were on her brilliant beauty, her sweet, sad expression, that touched the soul with its look of patient resignation.

"Mother, bless me," she whispered. "I never heard a mother's prayer for my peace."

"Child, child, it is from you I should crave blessing and pardon," said Tessa, faintly. "But it is too late—too late to prove my penitence, my love. May Heaven atone to you, my precious injured one, for the sin of a mother, and the sufferings it has entailed. May the richest blessings rest on my daughter, my only child, my heart's sole treasure. Marian, be to her as a mother," she added, faintly, glancing round at her sister's calm, meditative form.

"I will. Be at peace, my sister," returned the woman. "There is a nobler, brighter fate for your daughter than she or you can suspect. Now," she continued, "there remains but one ordeal more, one more pardon to speak, one more farewell to say, and then you will be at rest. Tessa, my sister, you spoke but now of him who betrayed you, who led you into sorrow. Can you from your heart say that you forgive him, that you will with your dying breath pray that the curse should be removed from him and his?" she added, solemnly. "There has been fearful retribution exacted, and for you an ample atonement made. Do you desire that the curse should cease, and that his child should be blessed as she deserves? Were he living would you pray that his punishment should cease?"

"Oh, I would, from my heart. Heaven help and forgive me as I repeat me of my weakness and sin, that dragged so many into grief and suffering," faltered the invalid.

"Then his child shall receive the absolution you thus pronounce," said Marian, solemnly. "Lena of Arnheim, child of an erring father and repentant angel mother, come and receive the reward you have so nobly earned. Your heroism and devotion may well cover a multitude of sins. Tessa, this is the child of Oscar, Count Arnheim, and Sybil his wife, who was believed to have died almost ere she saw the light, but whose early years were sheltered and youth trained in a purer and healthier life more than almost than a castle."

Lena's astonishment was almost lost in awe and quaking emotion as she met the bright flash of pleasure in those suffering features of which her own sweet face had long been the very charm and consolation.

"Blessings, blessings on you, my angel guardian, my noble, saint-like nurse," murmured the woman. "His child, his child," she murmured, "and here, the injured one. Yes, she is like him, but with an angel look in her face. Ah, Marian, she has indeed atoned, were such needed by my sinful self."

And the tears rained down the wasted cheeks as Lena bent and kissed her again and again.

"Lena, dear child, you will be rewarded—you have removed the curse," said the sufferer, faintly. "Remember, I said it!—tell him!"

The girl whispered holy words of comfort in the ears of the dying ere she raised herself from the couch, and in her sweet, thoughtful humility drew back to give place to the husband and the child in that solemn hour.

Harold placed his arms under the wasted frame, and pillowed the suffering head on his bosom, while Elgiva clasped one hand in hers, and Marian stood reverently gazing at the scene.

It was a still and silent death-bed, broken only by murmurs of love and penitence and whispered promises and vows, that were to influence the destiny of many of the living as well as soothe the passing away of the departing spirit.

But even those broken, hushed words ceased, the head drooped more feebly, the hands relaxed, the eyelids closed, the lips hushed the half-audible murmure.

With a quivering sob like that of a weeping child, Tessa, the once erring love of Oscar, Count Arnheim, the penitent and pardoned wife of Harold, the Zingara chief, entered into her rest.

CHAPTER LI.

Love is the happy privilege of the mind;

Love is the reason of all living things.

A trinity there seems of principles

Which represent and rule created life—

The love of self, our fellows, and our Maker.

A week had passed since the death of the gipsy heroine of the tragedy which had worked such extended and lengthened woe.

Still Lena was domiciled at the castle which belonged to her ancestors, and which brought such dream-like memories to her mind.

Elgiva had become to her as a dear and cherished friend, a beloved sister, such as the bride of her precious, injured brother might well claim to be.

But still the noble girl had kept her plighted word.

Albeit she could not refrain from speaking words of hope and comfort to Juan's mourning betrothed, Lena had not betrayed the secret of his existence, never compromised Prince Charles's safety and honour by speaking of the blessed truth.

And now the eighth day had come, and Marian

vaguely hinted at some new revelation that would terminate the long suspense of the much-tried girl. Lena had risen early and sought on the battlements of the castle some refreshment for the fevered brow and throbbing temples that began to speak of the overstrained nerves which needed repose and ease.

It was a glorious morning. The sunrise glowed hopefully, the wild breezes brought strength and health in their breath, and Lena, with all the buoyancy of youth, felt insensibly a fresh joy, a spring of hope welling forth in her heart as she reviewed the strange events of her young but memorable life.

Juan, her beloved brother—yes, brother in blood as in heart! How her heart glowed as she thought of him in his distant seclusion, as she reviewed his sufferings, and blessed the hand that had guided and assisted her in saving the life of one so dear and so persecuted by fate and foes.

When would the end come? When should she be enabled to welcome him as her own precious brother—the heir of their line, the head of their lordly house?

It was an anxious, eager craving for the end, but Lena had learned patience in the school of adversity and she could wait and wait and hope.

"I am ungrateful, impatient," she exclaimed. "If he had perished in that horrible den I might have mourned; but now it is wicked. I must school this wayward heart."

There needs little schooling for your impatient nature, sweet Lena," said a voice that had something almost of reverence in its tone. "Would that all were as free from error and weakness as your noble self."

"Prince Charles! Oh, how thankful I am to see you," exclaimed the girl, eagerly springing towards him. "Tell me, is he—my dear brother safe? Oh, do not keep me in suspense," she added, with a touch of impatience in her voice that spoke of the deep agitation of her heart.

"Heaven forbid that I should give you a moment's pain, dear Lena," was the gentle reply. "And I can warm your heart, if you will promise me to control its impatient beatings. If I assure you that Lord Chetwode is not only in actual safety but that he may without fear or mischance claim his birthright and return to his native land, would you be very much disappointed to yield up your new-found heiress-ship?"

Lena's hands clasped, and her very frame shook with the intensity of her emotion.

"Prince, please do not if it is not true; I am very weak, I fear I could not bear it."

"You are a heroine, my noble girl, and I would rather cut out my tongue than deceive you even in the veriest shade," he returned, firmly. "Lena, thank Heaven your trials are over and his. Will you forgive my selfishness if I think of myself in such an hour of joy? You have been to me a guardian angel. You have rebuked my base passions, softened my fierce imperiousness, elevated my low selfishness by your teaching and your example. Can you learn to tolerate my love, Lena, to accept me as your husband and yet your votary, as the companion of your life and the pupil of your lofty goodness?"

The girl's colour changed with a propitious rapidity.

Perhaps she scarcely knew what love was in the full ardour and intensity that marked Elgiva's and Juan's passionate affection. But she could scarcely help being touched by the humble, deep, unchanging passion she had inspired in one whose claims to distinction were high and noble as this German prince, and whose services had tested to the very utmost his generosity and his truth.

Now that her engrossing duties were ended, now that the unhappy Tessa was gone, and Juan once more restored to liberty and happiness, she had more leisure to respond to the present and powerful claims on her zeal and gratitude and love.

"It is ungrateful to—to refuse what might be any return for your great service, prince," she faltered, blushing deeply, "but I would entreat you to wait till—all all is finished, till my—till," she added, softly, "our work is done."

"Bless you for that one word, my Lena," said the prince. "Yes, I will obey your slightest wish, and the sole merit I claim, in all I have done, is that I could discover the bright merits of one so peerless even when obscured by the accidents of fortune and malice of foes. But come, the time is not long, and I have only to prepare you for the agitation that may await you before I conduct you to the presence of those who can satisfy you that your sorrows and anxieties have at length come to a close."

He drew her hand in his arm as he spoke and led her with the respect he might have shown to a queen from the high raised platform where they stood down the winding stairs, and again along passages that she was as yet unfamiliar with, till at length he paused before a door.

"Lena, be prepared," he said; "more than one near relative awaits you here, and the happiness of those you love is about to be raised to its very height of bliss. You have borne sorrow and suffer-



[THE CLOSING SCENE.]

ing nobly. Can you nerve yourself for the rush of joy?"

Her sparkling, joyous eyes, the bright, buoyant face, was sufficient reply to the caution, and the next minute he opened the door and led her forward into the room.

For a brief second the scene swam before her eyes in misty confusion, then, as all cleared before her, she could discern figures, some dear and all familiar to her eyes.

No, not all. Marian was there, and Harold, and—joy of joys—Juan, with his corpse-like pallor deepened into the hue of delicate but life-like health, and Elgiva—with the deep mourning garb changed for a brighter, bride-like white robe.

But there was another figure, all strange to her, and yet which attracted her with strange power.

A man, advanced in years, but far more deeply tried and worn by grief and suffering, was resting as if still an invalid on a couch, though the light in his eyes and the chastened joy that shone in his whole features seemed to say that there was a peace in his heart to which it had long been a stranger.

To this individual Prince Charles led the fair girl on his arms with a proud yet cautious resolution.

"Count Oscar of Arnheim, I bring you your daughter as the choicest treasure of your heart, the most precious possession in your restored fortunes; and yet my next desire will be to rob you of the priceless gem."

The old man extended his arms to the astonished girl.

"Lena, my darling daughter, the saviour of your brother, the very mainstay of our house, can you learn to regard with affection and indulgence the parent of whose very existence you were in ignorance?" he said, falteringly.

"Ah, I have heard all," he continued. "I know how deep is my debt to my child, and that, in any case, it is indeed the father who owes reverence and homage to his noble and blessed child."

"No, no, no," she exclaimed, eagerly, "that cannot be—but—I do not understand. Where is—Juan, what does all this mean? And you, uncle," she added, turning to Harold, with the title she had given him from infancy, "I thought the count, my father—was—dead," she added, falteringly.

Harold stepped forward and took her hand in his with a look and tone of deep feeling as he replied:

"Lena, or, as you should now be called, Lady Lenora, of Arnheim, the truth and explanation of the past would occupy a volume and bring to light details that would be but useless and painful offence to your pure young ears. Suffice it that from the early and repented crime of your regained father a deep curse was pronounced in vengeance by my own sinful

and presumptuous lips. In pursuance of that curse your brother was stolen from his home, you were abducted and reported to have died in your very birth, and your mother fell a victim to the griefs thus inflicted upon her. Nor was this all. The crime led to others, and the heir of the now childless count determined to hasten his succession to the heritage, and it was only by a miracle that the design was frustrated by the compassion of those employed to execute its sin. Meanwhile the agency of a powerful and mysterious body, to whom it is not safe even to allude, was enlisted on behalf of its members. And it was ordained that Ludovic, the heir of Chetwode, should only receive his heritage by marrying within the tribe that had been injured by his father's crime.

"It seemed to be a fate—a consequence of the curse—when his heart was given to his supposed cousin, and he suffered the penalty of such obstinacy, from which he was so miraculously delivered. But Heaven, that rules over the most powerful among men, brought to pass in its wisdom what we failed to discover. And Juan's instinct guided him aright in his choice of his Zingara bride, albeit it was in the disguise of his supposed heiress cousin, and by so doing he has escaped the doom and fulfilled his destiny; while the forgiveness of the dying and the heroism of the living have removed the long and deep curse on the erring race."

"Say rather," interrupted Marian, "that the discipline of calamity and grief purified the dross from the gold, and that a woman's noble devotion—a woman's unselfish heroism atoned for a woman's wrongs. Lena, good and noble and true, you have worked out a noble purpose. Brief and bitter has been your ordeal, yet you have rescued the doomed one, soothed the last days of the dying, touched the flinty hearts, and removed an awful doom from your race. May you preserve in your elevated rank the virtues of your humble life, and wear on your heart the cross even as you will bear on your head the jewelled coronet. Farewell. My mission is ended, and I go to distant lands to pray for the pardon of the dead and the happiness of the living."

She hung a jewelled cross round Lena's neck as she spoke, and walked steadily from the room, as if she could not trust herself to say more, or to regard those more immediately connected with her, and Harold prevented Elgiva's impulse to follow her aunt's steps.

"Leave her to herself; we shall have other opportunities of bidding her farewell," he said. "Marian will appear at her own time and way—without influence or constraint of ours—or not at all. My child, yield to your new happiness, and let the old

and the long-tried find peace in repose and content after their labours."

Months elapsed ere the weddings of the principal characters in this eventful drama were solemnized at the chapel where the curse had been pronounced on the christening of the heir of Chetwode and Arnheim.

The scandal and gossip had died away, and the tales which rumour circulated were at length crushed by their own inconsistencies and falsehood, till the circles who had witnessed the chequered phases of the singular fortunes of the noble race of Chetwode were fain to accept the brief and simple explanation that alone was vouchsafed them.

And little reeked the noble heir or his lovely Zingara bride of the gossip, which had discussed their once interrupted and now solemnized bridal.

Nor did Prince Charles heed aught save his own intense and perfect happiness in securing his hard-won bride, the peerless Lady Lenora of Arnheim, the fair treasure of the mysterious cave, the saviour of her brother from a living death.

Oscar, Count Arnheim, lived to see the happiness of his son, and to witness the christening of an infant grandson—over whose infancy was a blessing and not the curse that had blighted its father's childhood and youth.

But he soon afterwards sank into the grave calm, resigned and penitent to the last.

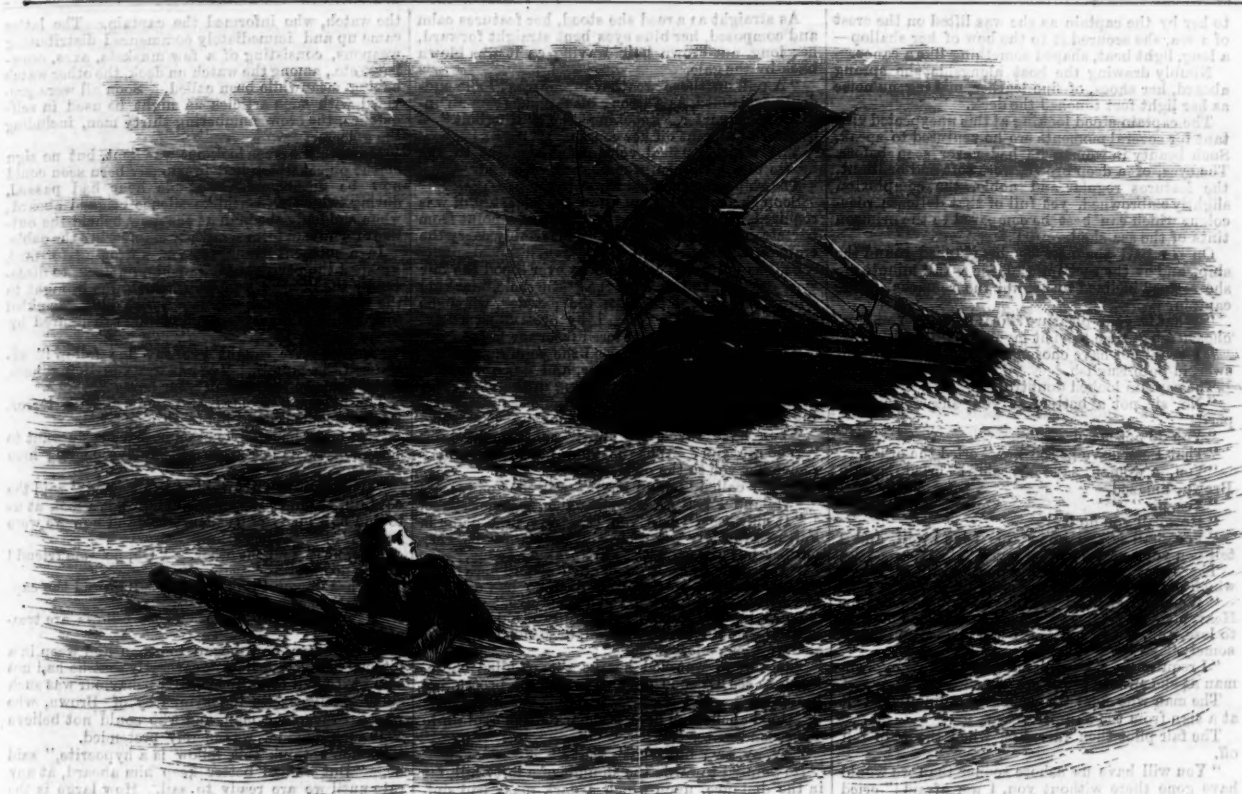
And the only time that Marian Oliver ever appeared, after her farewell, was among the mourners at his funeral.

Harold took up his abode near the Castle of Lutrecht, and near the splendid princely residence of Prince and Princess Charles of Merta, whose children appeared to be the chief objects of interest and comfort to his remaining days.

And Amice—what of her? A lonely, unloved life succeeded to her proud, capricious youth, and the solitude which punished the coquetry and pride of her early days was perhaps the most bitter punishment that could have avenged Lord Easton's wrongs or Elgiva's neglected sorrows. No one cared to risk hand and heart where the gift had once been so cruelly and wantonly misused, and no succeeding suitor courted the beautiful but vain and heartless girl, once heiress of a noble dower.

But Bertie, the true, noble-hearted lover of the pretty Lena, found his reward in the gratitude and affection and friendship lavished on him by those he had so signally saved, and the houses of Arnheim and Chetwode in all their branches honoured as a friend and equal the humble gipsy whose aid had so powerfully availed in averting the fatal results of the Gipsy's Curse.

THE END.



RED HELM

CHAPTER I.

Fair tresses man's imperial race ensnare,
And beauty draws us with a single hair.

Pope.

THE "Ringbolt," a stately merchantman, bound to the Spice Islands, was suddenly becalmed within a thousand miles or so of her destination.

Some of the men aboard were merely impatient; others—old tars who knew what such a calm boded—exchanged ominous glances.

The captain and his mates looked grave when an examination of the barometer showed how rapidly it was falling.

In the distance the waters of the vast ocean were soon observed to be disturbed, where a long line of bubbling, boiling foam, with columns of spray careering to the blue skies, betokened that the tempest was already commencing in that quarter.

"Stand by halliards! In with royals and the staysails!" shouted the first mate, a fine, handsome young fellow of twenty-five.

He was promptly obeyed; in fact gallant Harry Brenton never issued an order that was not worth obeying. He was a skillful seaman, bred to the water almost from childhood, one of those who seem born to live on the ocean wilderness. Men who sailed under him always spoke well of him, for he was naturally endowed with the magnetism which attracts so many people. Frank and good-natured, while at the same time as brave as a lion, the young man was one well calculated to win the confidence of all. Now as he darted amidships, shaking his coal-black hair from his sunburned cheek, and glancing aloft at the men there working, the latter felt that whatever he might say or do would be right—that no man was better fitted to combat with such a tempest as was now approaching than Harry Brenton.

Topgallant sails and royals having been neatly stowed, the mate ordered the fore and mizen top-sails to be close reefed and furlled, and one reef put in the main.

The storm was still so far off that there was plenty of time to do this, and do it well.

"Think we'll have time to send down those top-gallant masts?" inquired the captain.

"No, sir."

"Well, here goes—I'm going to try, at any rate!" said the other.

Accordingly the required orders were given. The nimble tars bounded aloft, but just as they were about lowering the masts the loud rack and white

water of the storm were not farther than a quarter of a mile to windward.

"Down, for your lives!" screamed the captain.

"Ay, ay, down you come—cheerily, men!" cried Brenton.

The suspended spars were therefore left hanging about midway in the topmast rigging, the men having but just time to gain the deck when the full force of the tempest pounced upon the ship.

What would have happened had these men remained aloft now was shown.

Cracking, snapping, and crashing away went the topmast, breaking short off near the cap, with all its hamper falling over to leeward in the sea.

The ship had been thrown on her beam ends, and, shrouded in a complete mass of flying spray, she was scudding along, with every timber creaking, groaning, and grinding, as if a wedge were rending it asunder.

In the thick and continuous flying clouds of spray to leeward the sea was scarcely visible. To windward it resembled a sheet of lead, so forcibly was it beaten down by the gale. Of this the howling and roaring were terrific, while above there was a prolonged humming sound, as if of a hollow ball or some other body cleaving the air.

Meanwhile the wreck of the mast was making sad music alongside, thumping against the ship's side.

"Clear away that wreck!" came the clarion voice of Brenton.

We have said the men never hesitated to obey the mate. At present obedience must be attended with great peril; but the mate himself sprang forward, axe in hand, even as the words escaped him.

Securing himself to the mainmast by a rope long enough to admit of his lowering himself alongside, he was soon on the spar, the blows of his axe falling fast and heavy.

Two sailors followed him, and the spar was cut clear.

As it drifted away from the ship the two sailors who had assisted Brenton sprang aboard. The young mate was about to follow when the rope holding him to the mainmast was cut in twain by the falling upon it of the sharp axe which one of the sailors had held.

With a cry of dismay the man stretched out his hand to assist the young mate aboard, but he was too late.

Clinging to the spar, half hidden by the flying spray, the first officer was soon carried out of sight to leeward in the rack and flying sound of the tempest.

The captain could only stand and stare, unable to utter a word, for he knew that no boat could live in such a sea.

So the ship, dashing on, was soon many miles

away from the place where the accident had occurred.

"Land, ho!" shrieked one of the men, now pointing ahead.

Yes, there it was—a small island, with masses of rugged rocks extending in a line along its front.

"Heaven help us now!" cried the captain.

In fact there seemed no way of preventing the catastrophe. The rocks were ahead, and the ship could neither be veered round, brought up to the wind, nor broached to.

The rocks now bore about a league ahead, but at the rapid rate of the vessel's speed she must reach them in less than half an hour.

While all aboard stood with white lips and anxious faces, awaiting the dreadful moment, the captain, glancing to windward, suddenly uttered an exclamation of joy, as he pointed towards an opening in the heavens, which promised a speedy lull in the violence of the gale.

In fact this soon took place, although the wind still blew violently, and a heavy sea succeeded the flatness which the surface of the ocean had hitherto presented.

The "Ringbolt" now was about a mile from the line of rocks alluded to. Her commander, still unable to veer or tack, thought the anchors might possibly hold her.

Both were soon let go, but the jerk given to the cable caused it to snap like pack-thread, and the ship still drifted towards the rocks. With such rapidity was she carried on that the skipper now decided to lower his boats and leave her to her fate.

Just as he was about giving the order, however, an exclamation from one of the men caused him to look to windward, when he beheld a young woman approaching his craft in a shallop, or light boat. As the land jutted out from the isle into the sea in this direction, he doubted not that the occupant of the boat had come from that quarter.

When she drew nearer all the spectators were struck with her beauty and grace of bearing. She was apparently of medium height, dressed in a garb of blue and red, with a round straw hat, from beneath which her long brown tresses in unconfined masses swept to her waist.

The red part of her attire consisted of a silk skirt looped up about the ankles, and the blue, of a mantle which was confined about the throat with a diamond clasp.

"Who can that be?" said the captain to his second mate. "It is certainly no native."

"I hardly think so," was the answer; "and yet she must live ashore here."

They continued talking about her until she came alongside, when, nimbly catching the rope thrown

to her by the captain as she was lifted on the crest of a sea, she scoured it to the bow of her shallop—a long, light boat, shaped something like a canoe.

Nimble drawing the boat alongside, she sprang aboard, her shoes, of fine leather, making no noise as her light feet touched the deck.

The captain stood looking at this unexpected visitant for several moments ere he ventured to speak. Such beauty in woman he had never seen before. The eyes, of a deep brown, were soft and brilliant, the features regular and noble, the complexion slightly embrowned, yet full of that delicate rose-colour which can best be compared to the crimson tints of the sea-shell.

On her part the new comer glanced round the ship, and at the rocks ahead, for a full minute ere she seemed inclined to answer the remarks of the captain.

"What is your pleasure?" said he. "You have chosen a bad time to visit my craft."

"I could not have chosen a better," was her answer, in pure English.

The captain looked doubtful.

"No, sir, not a better, as your ship is in great peril!"

"You do not mean—"

"That I can save her? Yes," cried the other.

"You, a woman, save my ship?" cried Captain Brown, amazed.

"Yes, sir."

"How can you do it?"

"You shall see. I know this island well, and I tell you your vessel can be saved."

There was about the speaker an air of truth, which partly convinced the captain.

"Well," he exclaimed, "if you can save her, for Heaven's sake do! It seems to me there is no time to lose, and, if you succeed, I will reward you handsomely."

"I require no reward," answered the young woman as she sprang to the wheel.

The man who held it obediently relinquished it at a sign from the skipper.

The fair pilot then raised it, when the ship fell off.

"You will have us ashore sooner than we would have gone there without you, I am afraid!" cried the captain, keenly eyeing the beautiful girl, as if to make sure she was sane.

"Do not fear!" was the answer. "You can but leave the craft to my guidance, and I assure you that you will not be sorry."

The captain for a moment looked undecided.

"What do you think about it?" he said to his second officer.

"Let her keep the helm," was the reply. "She cannot make matters worse than they would have been without her, at all events."

The girl seemed to pay no heed to this remark, but with her eyes turned towards a certain point among the rocks ahead she continued to guide the vessel. This was now heading towards the rugged kine, rushing along with a speed which it would seem must soon carry her against the rugged masses.

Suddenly the captain's face turned dark with a thought which had flashed on his mind.

Perhaps the beautiful girl guiding his ship was the emissary of bloodthirsty Malay pirates, who infested the neighbourhood of the East India Isles.

To look at her one would not deem this possible. Her European cast of countenance and her language seemed sufficient evidence of her not being leagued with the dusky island rovers.

Brown, however, was of a suspicious nature; and he knew moreover that appearances were deceiving.

Watching the young woman sharply, he thought he could detect a peculiar, exulting gleam in her eyes as the craft drew every moment nearer the rocks.

"You will have us afloat of them in a minute!" he exclaimed.

"Do not fear," was the answer. "I will pilot your vessel safely past them. See there!"

She pointed towards an opening in the line of rocks, which, owing to their peculiar formation, had not previously been observed by the seamen.

"The woman is true, after all!" exclaimed Brown to his second mate.

"Ay," answered the other; "who would have dreamed of that opening being there? Not I, for one."

"Nor I," said the captain. "Our ship is as good as saved if we get through that passage. See to getting the other anchor ready, Mr. Wendel."

The sheet-anchor was alladed to, the only one left aboard, which Wendel, issuing rapid orders, soon had ready.

Meanwhile the captain and his men kept their gaze upon the passage the ship now was approaching. This passage was no narrow that they doubted if the craft could be got through.

Glancing at the beautiful pilot, however, who was steering the ship with a skill and steadiness that excited their admiration, they saw no reflection of their doubts on her confident face.

As straight as a reed she stood, her features calm and composed, her blue eyes bent straight forward, her long, nut-brown hair waving as it was blown back by the gale.

"A pull on those weather-forebraces!" she suddenly exclaimed, as a strong blast came from an unexpected quarter, knocking the "Ringbolt" a quarter of a point off her course.

The clear, musical voice went straight to the hearts of the seamen, who obeyed, smiling.

The ship again heeded towards the passage.

Soon she entered it, and now the nicest skill was required, for the steering of a third of a point from her straight-line course must inevitably carry the craft on the rocks!

Still as quiet and confident as ever stood the fair steerswoman, and on went the "Ringbolt," making a bee-line straight through the passage, when she emerged into a bay; formed by protruding ridges of land and partially sheltered from the gale.

"Better anchor now!" cried the young woman. "Ay, ay!" was the answer, and down went the ponderous sheet-anchor splashing in the sea.

The ship swung round, and the able seamen, dattling aloft, soon had taken in her canvas.

"You have saved my ship!" said the captain. "Who are you? What is your name, that I may remember you to the owners?"

"I am called 'Island Fay,'" was the answer.

"Island Fay!" A strange name, is it not?"

"It may seem so to you, sir. My first name is Faith, and 'Fay' is the contraction of it. My mother has always used it in speaking to me."

"Your mother? Does she live ashore here?"

"Not my own mother, the one who has adopted me. But I must go—bid you good-bye."

So saying she bowed as gracefully as a queen, and, lightly springing over the rail, descended into her shallop alongside.

The sailors watched her as she paddled shoreward, to see her soon disappear round a protruding headland.

"Good anchorage here," remarked the captain to his second mate.

"Ay, ay, sir; but what's that?"

He pointed towards the summit of a lofty hill, far in the distance, upon which a dark mass had suddenly appeared.

The captain procured his glass and levelled it in the indicated direction.

"A body of men, I should say," he remarked.

"Some of the islanders watching us probably," said the second mate.

A troubled look crossed the captain's face.

"Who, knows," said he, "but we have got into a hornet's nest. That young woman was fair-spoken enough, and fair enough to look at, but I have seen treachery wear as pretty a mask as she."

"Do you think those islanders mean harm?"

"I don't know. We must keep a sharp look-out. The woman may have taken us here on purpose to put us in the power of cut-throats."

The second officer looked serious. A suspicion of the same kind had passed through his mind.

One fact he knew, which was that the Malayan islands were infested by thieves and robbers—that there had been cases of white people—lawless characters—joining them and acting as their leaders.

"As soon as possible," continued the captain, "we must repair damages and get away from here."

"So I think, sir!" echoed the second mate.

"You will at once set the men at work, Mr. Wendel, acting as my first officer. Poor Brenton is gone for good, I am afraid. I hardly think he could long keep his hold of that floating spar in such a gale."

"I'm afraid not, sir," answered Wendel, shuddering. "I have seen many men go overboard in my time, but I never felt so bad for any person as I did for Brenton, who was loved like a brother by us all."

The tears that gathered in the speaker's eyes were no discredit to him. Mr. Brown turned aside to hide the moisture in his own.

Wendel then went forward, and set the men to work getting up a new topmast and a top-gallant mast for the main.

By night they had commenced to rig the new spars, and the captain had hopes that he would be able to leave the island in a couple of days.

The night was dark, with moon and stars hidden by heavy clouds. As the men stopped work Brown selected the best of them for the first watch, and superintended the posting of them about the different parts of the vessel.

The people on the distant hills having been observed to disperse towards dusk, the captain feared he would see or hear something of them before morning. He therefore ordered the look-outs to keep a sharp watch, and to report the least noise of a suspicious nature heard during the night.

At about eleven o'clock the look-out on the bow thought he heard a gentle plashing in the water towards land. He peered into the darkness, and thought he could discern something approaching the vessel. He immediately reported to the officer of

the watch, who informed the captain. The latter came up and immediately commenced distributing weapons, consisting of a few muskets, axes, crow-bars, etc., among the watch on deck, the other watch having meanwhile been called. Soon all were provided with such articles as might be used in self-defence, the crew numbering thirty men, including the officers.

Meanwhile a keen look-out was kept, but no sign of the object which had previously been seen could now be discovered. A whole hour had passed, during which a deathlike silence reigned aboard, when suddenly the man at the bow beheld the outline of a human form stealthily glancing the cable.

In a moment three seamen, springing forward, grasped the person and drew him on deck, to discover by the light of a lantern, which was brought to the spot, an old man—a Malay, with a low, wrinkled forehead, sunken eyes, and features disfigured by many scars.

"So we have caught you, my fine fellow!" exclaimed the captain. "What are you doing here, and where are the rest of your party?"

The old man seemed overwhelmed with terror. His frame shook, and his teeth chattered.

"No mean harm," he stammered. "We want to come aboard as friend, to tell Malays coming here to attack."

"I believe you are telling a falsehood," said the captain, "and that you wanted to get a look at us to find how many of us there were, and how we were armed."

"No, no!" said the other. "Oh, no—my friend! We do no dat!"

"What do you think of him?" inquired the captain of the second mate.

"I wouldn't trust him. These fellows are treacherous."

The old man now began to groan and weep in a piteous manner, declaring earnestly that he had not come with evil intentions. His behaviour was such as to finally excite the sympathy of Brown, who was a benevolent man, and who could not believe that such conduct was merely pretended.

"I don't think this fellow is a hypocrite," said he. "But we had better keep him aboard, at any rate until we are ready to sail. How large is the party coming to attack us?" he added.

"More than hundred," answered the old man, with ready frankness.

The captain and his second mate exchanged glances.

"When are they coming—to-night?"

"Next night," was the reply.

As the old man spoke the second mate, who was watching him keenly, thought he could detect a sudden gleam, as of exultation, shooting from the sunken orbs of the islander.

He drew the captain to one side.

"I don't think we can trust that fellow," he whispered.

This was said near the lee rail, but the islander, who was two feet distant, suddenly looked up, as if he had heard the words.

His hand quickly sought his breast—a dagger gleamed in his grasp, and, ere any person could prevent him, he sprang at the second mate, burying the weapon to the hilt in the heart of the unfortunate officer.

With a low groan the mate sank to the deck—there was a splash, and his murderer was in the sea.

CHAPTER II.

Hope withering fled, and Mercy sighed.

Farewell. Byron.

So quickly had these movements been performed that all present had not time to recover from their surprise ere the swimmer was out of sight in the darkness.

The captain bent over his dying officer and ordered him to be conveyed into the cabin, but before the order was executed he was a corpse.

At the same moment the look-out on the bow sent word to the captain that a large party of swimmers were approaching the ship.

"Are you sure?" inquired the skipper.

"Ay, I saw their heads like black balls through the darkness, a few fathoms from the vessel," was the reply.

The captain with others peered through the gloom, but saw nothing.

"Strange," said he; "you must have been deceived. If they come to-night, they will probably come in canoes."

"I was not mistaken," answered the man. "I saw those heads, sir, as plainly as I now see you."

"Then the rascals, who can swim like fishes, have gone under water. Keep a sharp look-out, men, and stand ready, all hands!"

So saying, the speaker quickly posted his crew in different parts of the ship. A portion were arranged in line on the starboard side, another part on the larboard, and a third aft, near the stern.

About a quarter of an hour had passed away,

during which nothing had been heard to disturb the surface of the water, and no object had been there visible, when suddenly a cry was heard from aft, as a body of natives, rising up from the water, commenced clambering the vessel's side.

"Down with them! Beat them back!" cried Brown, as he discharged a pistol he carried at one of the islanders.

With a wild scream the fellow tumbled back into the sea, but his companions, with the celerity of cats, seizing the mizen chains, endeavoured to get over the rail.

The men aboard, with axes, guns, and crowbars, endeavoured to beat them back, and partially succeeded, but even as they did so cries were heard from other parts of the vessel, which now were also seen swarming with Malays.

In fact, the lowness of the "Ringbolt's" hull rendered access aboard an easy matter. From all sides the dusky natives, as by one simultaneous motion, commenced clambering up the ship's sides.

"Now, men!" cried the captain, "look out! Stand and fight to the last! These fiends will show us no quarter!"

"Ay, ay!" shouted the crew. A few minutes more, armed with clubs, spears, and knives, the natives forced their way aboard the vessel—a hundred or more in all. There was little hope for the whites, who numbered less than thirty.

They fought bravely, however, knowing there would be no quarter shown them, until more than half their number were killed, when they retreated toward the stern, where the captain had contrived to haul a nine-pounder, loaded with slugs and other missiles.

As the little party gathered round him he was on the point of applying his torch to the powder, when a blow from the club of a huge native emerging from behind the mizen mast laid him dead, and quivering upon the deck. Ere the torch could be used by a sailor who had quickly picked it up, this poor fellow was also laid low, and the flaming stick, flying from his hand as he threw out his arms, fell into the steerage hatch.

Now upon the remnant of the crew rushed the whole party of savage Malays, screaming like tigers, and brandishing clubs and knives.

Two of the men sprang overboard, to be instantly beaten to death by natives in a canoe, which had now come alongside; the others, four men in all, were stabbed to the heart by their enemies' long knives.

Masters of the vessel, the Malays climbed about the deck in a wild dance, screaming like so many hyenas, while over their dark features the dauntless in the rigging threw a lurid glare, giving to them the aspect of demons.

But their savage mirth was of short duration. In the midst of the dance a terrible cry was heard, as one of their number pointed toward the steerage hatch, whence columns of flame were now issuing in long, lurid streams. The torch falling into the hold, as stated, had caught in some heap of dry ropes and canvas, had soon set the place on fire.

Rumbling, roaring, and crackling, this gained headway every moment.

The Malays, seizing buckets, made efforts to stop the flames, but in vain. The red columns clambering higher and higher, spreading throughout the whole length and breadth of the hold, soon were running in long, serpentine tongues up the fore and mizen rigging.

Finding their efforts to put out the fire in vain, the Malays—with savage yells betook themselves, some to the sea and others to the canoes which had come alongside, and which were soon so crowded that they would hold no more.

By this time the flames had made such rapid headway that they nearly enveloped every part of the ship.

Roaring, booming, crackling, sending showers of sparks on all sides, they seemed to lick the very heavens as they still mounted higher and higher.

He saw that fire—the poor castaway, Harry Brenton.

Where was he now?

Adrift upon the sea, many miles from the burning ship, paroled with thirst and faint from a heavy blow he had received on the head from the sudden tossing up of the piece of timber after it went clear of the ship, he still clung to his hold.

He would not have been able to do so as long as he had done but for his lashing himself to the drifting fragment.

Thus, tossed high by the careering seas, he had been carried about in that mad tempest with a violence that made his brain reel, while sharp pains from the blow he had received went through his head like a knife.

Stained with blood and the salt spray, his dark hair hung down about his neck, while through the wind and rack his brilliant eyes, glowing like stars, peered eagerly as he watched for a sail.

Hours had passed, and at last there was an abatement in the force of the gale, but with it came the darkness, shrouding in impenetrable gloom all objects save the white, boiling foam of the sea.

On all sides of him it hissed and seethed, seeming to go round him in dots and circles, while the phosphorus sparkled from it like the eyes of countless numbers of little sprites.

Brenton was a true type of the thorough sailor. While there was a spar, a stick of timber to hold on to he was not the man to despair.

Still, believing himself to be far from land, he had little hope of being saved.

The gale would probably last several days, and as he was out of the usual track of East India vessels there was small chance of his being picked up.

Suddenly he beheld, far away in the direction towards which he was drifting, a bright glare upon the sky, growing larger every moment, until he could no longer doubt it was a vessel of some kind on fire.

Even in that perilous hour, although the sight was a sort of beacon, reminding him of the vicinity of his fellow creatures, yet he would much rather not have seen it than to know that his shipmates were in trouble.

Was his shipmates, because the young man doubted not that it was the "Ringbolt," which was on fire.

"I cannot imagine how the accident could have happened," he muttered, "as Captain Brown is usually a careful man."

Little did he guess the truth—that previous to this the last of the "Ringbolt's" crew had met his death at the hands of the fierce Malays.

The long night wore on. The fire of the burning vessel vanished, and another glow—that of the sun in the East—was visible in the sky.

Far away Brenton now beheld the dark-blue outline of land.

The set of wave and current carried him towards it.

In a few hours he was near enough to detect the outlines of the trees near the beach.

No sign of the "Ringbolt," however, was now visible, and Brenton, concluding that the vessel was near this coast when she caught fire, feared that all his shipmates had perished in a watery grave.

Soon his quick eye detected several dark specks approaching from shore.

"I have been seen," he thought; "these are canoes, containing friendly people—at least I hope so—and I shall soon be picked up. They will prevent my drifting around yonder point of land out to sea."

The point he alluded to was the long promontory on which the "Ringbolt's" crew had met his death, whence beautiful Faith, the female pilot, had come to save the ship "Ringbolt," from going to pieces on the rocks beyond.

The current setting toward and around this point drew Brenton rapidly on, so that there was every chance of his being carried past it into the open sea ere the canoes could reach him.

At last he found himself opposite the promontory, and within about a mile of it, while the canoes were still nearly two miles distant.

His heart sank within him.

"I shall be carried out to sea," he thought.

He used every effort in his power, by paddling with his hands and moving his legs, to urge the spar toward the land, but all in vain.

Suddenly he heard a wild, fierce yell, and looking, he beheld a canoe containing three armed Malays emerging from land and shooting towards him.

He knew at once they were enemies—their manner plainly indicated this—and he was now as sorry as he was discovered as he had previously been that he was not.

Without a weapon, weak, faint, and lashed to a spar, what could he do in self-defence against three armed men?

A protruding rock, under the lee of which the canoe had glided, hid it for the present from sight. Several minutes must elapse ere it would again emerge into view.

While Brenton was momentarily expecting to see it reappear he heard a slight rippling noise, when he glanced up to behold approaching him in a light shallop one of the fairest visions that had ever met his sight.

It was beautiful Faith, who had suddenly shot out from a cave amid a thick growth of shrubbery ashore, and was now rapidly approaching the castaway. The latter admired her graceful form, her chestnut hair, glittering in the rays of the rising sun like threads of gold, and the rounded shape of the white arms playing the paddle with easy skill.

"Who can she be? Surely she cannot be in league with those piratical-looking characters I just saw."

"On she came and soon was at his side, her cheek glowing, and her glances, which had never before quailed before the gaze of man, drooping beneath his ardent look.

"Quick!" she said, in her musical voice. "Into the canoe. They shall not harm you if Faith can help it."

"Whom do you mean?" inquired Brenton. "Those Malays I saw in the canoe?"

"Yes."

"They are not your friends then?"

"Friends? No. I like them not; but they would not harm me, for mother—the person I call my mother—is a Malay woman of great influence among them."

"Do you live ashore here?"

"Yes. But speak low, for the Malays have quick ears, and they must not know I have tried to save you."

Brenton remained silent until they gained the shore, which they did ere the canoe containing the Malays had passed round the point.

"Come this way," said Fay. "Ah," she added, noticing the difficulty with which he made his way through the shrubbery, "you are faint. I should have thought of that."

Blushingly she offered him her arm for a support, which he readily accepted, for it was indeed pleasant to be thus assisted by the beautiful girl.

They had not walked far when Fay laid a finger on her lip, at the same time halting.

"Hark!" she whispered, "here they come."

"Who?"

"Giant Bolak and his lion!" said Fay.

"Who are they?"

"You will soon see. But for Heaven's sake let us keep out of sight. Bolak is worse than any of the other islanders. His lion is almost as savage as a wild one too. Heaven help you, sir, if Brave—such is the lion's name—should see you. He would tear you to pieces."

(To be continued.)

LORD DANE'S ERROR.

CHAPTER I.

Baron Chandos was somewhat of a nervous man, and he was not at all comfortable in his own house.

After Sybil had gone out of the room he sat for a long time, thinking gloomily, till Penita spoke to him.

"If it was Volney himself whom Sybil saw, I shall not be surprised to see him any day," she said, brightly.

"I shall," he believed it was he whom Lady Sybil saw, but I also believe," he added solemnly, "that she will never see him again in this life. His mind has evidently become unhinged by all he has been through. How else could he have remained ignorant of what has been transpiring concerning himself in England?"

"It would not surprise me to hear that Volney, Lord Dane, had drowned himself in the Seine. You women are a hard-hearted set—obdurate as flint till it's too late, when you're ready to make any mad and ridiculous sacrifice to bring back what you might have had at first with a word."

Penita sighed.

"I suspect you are right, uncle," she said.

Baron Chandos turned upon her in some exultation.

"You are no better than the rest," he said. "Why are you so hard on Talbot Dane? Do you imagine, my lady, that you are so human yourself?"

Penita's dark, bright eyes widened at this unexpected speech. But she understood its meaning so well that she smiled faintly in spite of her anxiety about Volney.

Baron Chandos frowned till his eyebrows met, and his black eyes were sterner and angrier than ever.

"Is life long enough for such folly?" he asked.

"Do you love him? Does he love you? What matter what he has done in the past then? Heaven knows, and so do you, how bitterly he has repented and atoned. Yet here you sit in your fancied superiority, and will not forgive him whatever he does. Are you so much better than other people, my lady, and did you never find yourself tempted to do something you were sorry for afterwards?"

Penita smiled again.

She had seen Talbot Dane now and then in the three and a half years gone, and each time found an improvement in him for her practical mind.

"Who told you I was so hard and had so fixed an idea of my own superiority, uncle?" she asked.

"I never told you or him I would never forgive Talbot Dane. I have reason to think I exaggerated the wrong he did me; some of it at any rate. Besides, he has never asked me to forgive him. You would not have me go, and entreat him to accept my pardon, would you?"

The kind baron stared.

"See here," said he, suddenly starting up, "you owe him something, and you've money enough of your own to set him up at once. May I bring him here this evening?"

Penita shook her head, blushing deeply.

"Wait till Volney is found. Besides, he may have forgotten me. He has not been near me in three years."

"He has not forgotten you," declared the baron; "the more's the pity. You will wait too long, my Lady Perdita, as your sister Sybil has."

"Volney will come back to her, I am sure he will. He cannot help learning now all that has happened which has so altered life for him. He will come when he once discovers all."

"There are a hundred chances to one that he never will discover it," said Baron Chandos, sadly. "It's a bad business all round. Don't you see he is afraid of the madhouse? And no wonder. I know what those places are. Then he has been made to believe somehow that Lady Sybil put him in there. Besides, he lived a falsehood so long himself that it comes easy to believe that others are deceiving him whatever they say. The chances are that he will hide himself again without asking a question."

"He may, but, pardon me, uncle, I cannot believe he would do anything so ridiculous," said Perdita, gravely, shaking her graceful head.

"Humph," retorted the baron, angrily. "I don't know that it is any more ridiculous than you and Talbot are doing."

Perdita blushed again, and smiled a little. "See here, uncle," she said, "I think you are rather hard on me, don't you? Has Mr. Dane ever been inside Dane House since I came to live in it? Has he ever made the attempt to speak to me or bow to me, or renew the acquaintance in any manner?"

"It would be very singular indeed if he had after what you said to him at Rylands. Have you forgotten, my lady, that you declined the honour of his acquaintance then and there, and for ever?"

"I have not forgotten. I was wrong, I was hasty. I loved him as well as Sybil loves Volney once. When I found him cruel, unmanly and treacherous I hated him. I never did want to see him or hear of him again. But I have learned some particulars concerning my going to Rylands which alter my opinion of Mr. Dane somewhat. Cheery did one honourable thing, uncle, he had written out a true statement of everything to give to Sybil, but it never came into her hands till yesterday. It was that rogue, Clever Dick, who had it all the time. He stole it from Cheery, and sold it yesterday to us."

Perdita smiled enchantingly at the wide-eyed baron as she went on:

"This statement exonerates Mr. Dane from much for which I had blamed him—from so much indeed that while I cannot—that—in short," and Perdita blushed and laughed again, "if you think that Mr. Dane would like it, uncle, I am willing to be friends."

Baron Chandos leaped to his feet in ecstasy, his dark face glowing, his eyes blacker than ever with joy and emotion.

"May I bring him here to-night?" he asked.

"If he will come—yes. He may not desire my acquaintance now."

A faint shadow rose in Perdita's eyes at the thought.

The baron smiled in his turn as he moved towards the door.

"Make yourself handsomer than you ever did before, my Lady Perdita," he said, confidently; "you may entertain the future Lord Chancellor of England this evening."

Perdita sank into a cushioned seat after he was gone, and covered her bright, sweet face with both hands.

"What if he should refuse to come after all," she thought, "Most men would after such scornful treatment from me. But then he did not do right, and if he has any conscience he must know it and feel it, and if he's worth any woman's loving he loves me yet. Any way I love him."

And all at once, to her own amazement, Perdita found herself sobbing, she who so seldom shed a tear.

The brave little heart had borne a great deal and not made a moan during these three and a half years gone.

She had believed Talbot Dane unworthy, horribly so, but her heart had clung to him.

She had loved him all the while, and at the moments when she had despised his supposed falsehood and villainy the most the thought of his handsomeness, manly face, the remembrance of his looks and words at Falkner, had come back upon her with a strange, sweet thrill that would never be wholly banished. And now she was to see him once more after so long.

They were to meet in the stately and magnificent house from which she and Volney had displaced him.

They were to meet as equals—nay, not on equality as the world goes, for she was Lady Perdita now, and he was only plain Talbot Dane, barrister, without title or fortune.

Perdita made a careful toilet that night.

She and Sybil still wore black—they both vowed they would wear nothing else till Volney was found, but even a black toilet is capable of deviations.

Perdita had a maid now in her improved fortunes, not a Frenchwoman, she had chosen a pretty English girl instead.

But she sent her maid away, and arranged her own bright, brown hair and put some white rosebuds in that and at her throat, and wondered as she stood before the elegant Dresden-framed mirror if Talbot Dane would think she looked well in all this fashionable array that was hers now, and if her hair would not look better worn in the old way, as when he had first known her at Falkner.

She decided, however, to leave it in the present fashionable "crimps" and "frizzes."

It would help mark the difference between that old time when she had been Miss Channing, a very humble individual in her own eyes, and now, when she had a name and undoubted position, and she had the weakness to want him to remember that.

Perdita had not told Sybil that Talbot Dane was coming.

"He may not come," she thought, and sidged about in her own rooms, waiting to be summoned to meet him with emotions that may be imagined.

She had never been so nervously uncomfortable before.

The evening wore on.

There were some callers, and Perdita received and entertained them with scarcely a change in her usual sweet brightness of demeanour. But all the while her heart was growing sore.

CHAPTER LXI.

PERDITA had admirers, and might have had many more. The arch and sparkling beauty of the young girl, her fresh and captivating manners and conversation, won upon every one. She had had several offers of marriage—amongst others a duke in one case and a baronet in another—one old, the other young. But she had refused them both, and she knew she never should marry any one unless it was Talbot Dane.

She was civil and smiling to every one who came on this particular evening, and looked more than usually lovely with that excited flush in her round, dark cheek and that eager, longing light in her sweet eyes.

But neither Baron Chandos nor Talbot Dane made his appearance.

Perdita stood after her guests were gone and looked at herself in the same Dresden-framed mirror she had dressed by. She took out the white rosebuds from her hair, and loosened the flowers from her throat.

"My uncle was right," she said. "I have waited too long. He has forgotten me, or else he never cared as I did. Perhaps he even hates me for having any part in sending him from Dane House."

Perdita, who nearly always slept well, dreamed sad dreams that night, and waked early. As she brushed out her long, shiny hair herself the next morning, for the companionship of her maid was still distasteful to her, she sighed more than once, and instead of "doing" her hair in the fashionable waterfall she twisted it in a loose coil, and putting on a black morning robe went down to breakfast with Sybil.

She looked so uncommonly listless and drooping for her that the young countess could but wonder and question her. She played with her chocolate, and crumbled her roll, and would not eat even a broiled pheasant's wing; but she said she was perfectly well, and had heard no bad news about Volney or any one.

The two ladies were still at the breakfast-table when a servant brought in Baron Chandos's card, and presented it on a silver salver to Lady Perdita.

Perdita's hand shook as she took it. She started up white and trembling, and Sybil, seeing her agitation, started also.

"You are deceiving me, Perdita," she said, seizing her by the arm with a convulsive hand, "Something has happened to Volney, and you are concealing it from me."

Perdita strove to calm herself.

"No," she said, solemnly; "indeed no."

"Let me go with you then to see Baron Chandos."

Perdita hesitated. Her uncle had doubtless brought her some information concerning Talbot Dane. How could she bear to be hindered hearing it by Sybil's presence?

"It is about Volney, or he would not ask to see you instead of me," asserted Sybil, excitedly. "I will see him."

And before Perdita could hinder her if she had wished she had darted past her and was in the oak parlour where the baron was waiting.

Another gentleman, tall and distinguished-looking,

stood partly beyond the curtained arch, his wide, dark eyes fastened hungrily on the door.

Baron Chandos met Lady Sybil as she was coming in, drew her aside, motioned Perdita to pass them, and then, with Lady Sybil's hand on his arm, went out of the oak parlour and closed the door.

Perdita's first emotion was amazement. She had discovered, she thought, by a swift glance within the room, that no one was with Baron Chandos. But she had not looked beyond the arch.

Now, as she stared at the closed door, and then back into the room, the gentleman before mentioned came forward eagerly at first and then more doubtfully.

Perdita looked absolutely frightened at the sight of him.

It was Talbot Dane.

He mistook her emotion, her sudden pallor, for displeasure at seeing him.

"Pardon me, Perdita, my lady," he said, stopping and looking at her with an expression of the keenest pain. "I was led to believe by something Baron Chandos said that you were willing to see me."

Perdita put her hand quickly on the back of a chair for support.

Practical and brave as she was, the sight of the man she had always loved, and with that look on his handsome face, was almost too much for her at that moment.

She extended her other hand with a fluttering smile.

"I am very glad to meet you," she said. "I told my uncle I should like to be friends with you."

The young man sprang forward and caught her hand between both his.

His fine eyes shone, his lips trembled.

"You are too good to me," he cried. "I don't deserve that you should speak so kindly, and I ought not to have presumed enough on that kindness to come here. But—but—it seemed to me when the baron, the dear baron told me I could not stay away. I am unworthy even your forgiveness. I have been a base and black-hearted man, but I could not stay away from Paradise when I was told I might come and look inside it. I am going away directly, Lady Perdita, only let me hear you say that you forgive me all the horrible wrong I did you once, and I will go."

Perdita's eyes were downcast. She could not trust herself to look in those other sincere and eloquent orbs just yet. She had always been a very outspoken girl.

"I looked for you last evening," she said, impulsively, and then flushed suddenly to the roots of her bright hair.

Talbot Dane looked startled. His lips trembled again. He looked like a man under powerful agitation.

"I was out of town. I only saw Baron Chandos this morning," he said, in a low voice. "I came instantly. I am not cold-tempered like you, Lady Perdita. I could not wait till even a proper hour."

Perdita lifted her eyes, such lovely brown eyes, soft yet spirited, frank though shy.

Not even Talbot Dane, with all the might of his transgressions on his head, could well fail to read their enchanting language.

"I am glad you came at once. I wished to be friends," she said; "that was what I told my uncle."

Talbot Dane could scarcely speak. He kissed the little hand he was still holding in a kind of passion.

"Friends, friends?" he repeated, almost inaudibly. Perdita went on, rapidly, her sweet voice faltering, but never failing.

"It was not the wrong you did me so much," she said, "that I reproached you for; I should have been just as indignant if it had been another."

"Oh, yes, yes, I know, a cowardly, contemptible, false villain," muttered Dane, clenching his teeth, and dropping Perdita's hand suddenly. "You ought to have me kicked out of your presence."

"Please not to interrupt me," resumed Perdita, her own lip quivering. "I blamed you more than you deserved; I have since found your man Cheery was the real villain. You were wrong, but not nearly so wrong as I believed you. I never learned all the truth till the day before yesterday. Shall we forget it all and begin our acquaintance here, now, as though there had been nothing in the past either to remember or forget?"

Talbot Dane drew a deep breath as he took the warm, soft hand Perdita extended once more. He was very much overcome.

Never man repented a wrong course more bitterly than he had.

"I did wrong," he said; "but I loved you all the time. I've no business to say it under the circumstances, but I hope you'll believe it. I did love you all the time, and if I had known it was you to whom

the succession belonged I should never have lifted a hand to hinder it."

"I believe you," said Perdita, eagerly; "and now please, please, if you have any regard for me, drop the subject right there; we begin our acquaintance here, this moment—you and I. Surely you will consent to that?"

"I should be a wicked ingrate if I did not, and I'm afraid I am. I don't deserve your love—how many times shall I say it, Perdita? But I love you so rocklessly that even your forgiveness seems a small boon without you can give me your love too. I am mad to imagine it; but just now you did look as if you cared for me, and I used to fancy it in the old, so happy days at Falkner. I wish I had stayed away. I ought. I thought if you said 'I forgive you, Talbot,' and just put your hand in mine, I should be satisfied, but I am not. Good-bye, Perdita, and Heaven bless you."

"Why are you going so soon? Is this the way you and I are to be friends?" asked Perdita, and at a glance in the frank, sweet eyes Talbot Dane faltered forth:

"Oh! my darling, can it be?" and had her in his arms at last.

It did seem too good to be true, but there was true metal in Talbot Dane, badly as he had acted once, and he and Perdita were not so poorly matched after all.

Perdita drew herself out of his arms presently, blushing and smiling.

"We must have my uncle and Sybil in," she said. "Sybil will be surprised. My uncle always said you were too good for me."

Talbot Dane's face grew clouded slightly, as he murmured:

"Too good! he had better not say it to me."

Perdita paused as she was about to ring the bell, and dropped an arm about his neck shyly.

"See here," she said, putting the other hand beside his cheek, "I was never so happy in my life as I am at this moment. Look at me, Talbot, and see if it is not so. There—oh, Talbot, how happy, how happy I am."

She hid her face on his shoulder, crying softly, and Talbot Dane brushed his eyes while he kissed her and said:

"Heaven helping me, Perdita, I will deserve you if man can."

(to be continued.)

WARNED BY THE PLANETS.

CHAPTER LXIV.

"I was lured into this den by the same man—the man who bears my name, whom I have loved and cherished as a son," gasped the earl, panting with weakness; "and left here to die that he may inherit my possessions. But, my child, don't think of me, but yourself. Is there no hope of escape?"

"None, at present," returned the sweet voice; "but Heaven has sent me to you, and will open up some way. It was not of my own will, not with my own strength, that I discovered the secret passage, and descended that awful staircase in all this thick darkness. Heaven is at work for us; be of good cheer, my lord."

Her words thrilled him like wine.

"Ah!" he cried, "I was willing to die, but you make me long for life again. There are so many wrongs that should be righted. If I were strong—if I had food to sustain life a few days longer!"

"Food! Are you starving, Lord Strathapey?"

"I haven't tasted food for two days, Maggie. They think me dead, no doubt, and I should have been but for the few sandwiches that chanced to be in my pocket. They are gone, and I am weak unto death now."

"And I have food in my room," she cried. "Oh, if we had a light—if my candle had not been extinguished."

"You have a candle, then?"

"Yes, yes," groping in the gloom. Ah, here it is, but how to light it?"

"I have a match-case in my pocket, if they are not all injured by the damp."

The earl took out his match-case, and struck one after another, but in vain—the dampness had ruined them, as he feared.

But at last one shot up into a slender, flickering blaze.

Maggie hurried forward with the candle, and the wick ignited and burned into a blaze.

The two, so unexpectedly brought together, gazed silently for the space of a minute into each other's eyes.

Maggie's lips quivered at the sight of the earl's shadowy face.

"Ah, my lord," she said, "how you have suffered! Let me hurry, back now and bring you the food, I

must take the light. I won't be long—unless I have been missed."

The hungry, wistful look in his eyes made her heart ache. She caught up the candle and hurried through the aperture, and up the spiral staircase with winged feet—on, and on, never pausing till she reached the terminus.

The sliding panel was still open, and the great, ghostly chamber beyond as dark and silent as the grave.

She flew in, and transferred the beef and omelette from the platter to her apron, fastening it up to the belt so as to form a pocket, then she took the mug of tea in one hand, and her light in the other, and went down again, through all the must and mould, the bats fluttering in her very face, the noisome creeping things clinging to her feet.

The earl's death-white face and eager eyes half startled her when she reached the vault. He put out his hands for the food like an impatient child, and Maggie, with the tears streaming down her own white cheeks, placed it before him, and sitting down on the great stone bench that occupied one corner, watched him while he devoured it.

"You shall have more to-morrow," she said, simply, when he had finished. "They always bring me more than I need—and now, my lord, I must go. If by any chance I should be missed, all hope would be at an end."

"I begin to feel strong already," said the earl, draining the last drop of tea. "Maggie, you have saved my life, and now I must think of saving you. Tell me how you got here—all about this secret staircase."

"My lord, I'm very sure that I shall find some means to save you," she replied, with a little self-confident smile. "Heaven would never have sent me down to you if it did not mean me to save you."

"If the spiral staircase leads downward," he said, after a moment of intense thought, "there must be one that leads upward to the main tower. But what could be gained by that? I am afraid, my poor child, there is no hope of escape! And your fate troubles me far more than my own! Heaven help us!"

"It will, my lord! Do not despair! And do not, I implore you, stir from this place till I come again. They believe you dead—do not undecieve them. You may look for me soon. Farewell, my lord."

She held out her hand with an air of womanly grace and tenderness. The earl clasped it, and raised it to his lips.

"Farewell, Maggie," he said. "If ever Heaven sent an angel of mercy to mortal man, it sent you to me this night."

She took up her candle and left him with a light step, and by the last glimmer of her taper, as it vanished from his sight up the spiral passage-way, he saw her white face and shining eyes looking back upon him like an impersonation of immortal hope.

Maggie threw herself across the grand bed, with its faded, silken coverlid, utterly exhausted. Her temples throbbed, and her breath came in gasps. The exercise and excitement of the night had been almost too much for her.

If she could only sleep her weariness would wear off. But "tired nature's sweet restorer" refused its soothing solace. She lay with distended eyes and clasped hands, her flickering taper burning in the alcove of the oaken casement, the grim portraits staring down upon her, and only one thought ringing again, and again through her overwrought brain—

Lord Strathapey's words:

"If the spiral staircase leads down, one must also run upward to the main tower."

Should she, weak and weary as she was, start forth again and test the truth of his assertion? The storm had spent its fury, the winds had lulled, and the sea subsided into sullen silence. Through the bars of her window she could catch now and then a rift of silver moonlight.

She arose at last, flinging repose out of the question, and sat upon the edge of the couch, debating within herself what course to pursue, when all at once, sweet and soft as the numbers of some heavenly dream, the notes of a flute came floating from below.

The air was that well-known old Highland melody, "The Campbells are coming," played with exquisite skill and sweetness.

Maggie had heard her old father sing it a hundred times, sitting by the fireside on winter evenings. It thrilled her through and through. She buried her face in the silken couch and sobbed like a child. Still the witching notes came up, clear and liquid as the voice of a nightingale. They seemed to call her, drew her by an irresistible spell.

She arose, moved by a vague impulse, and took up her taper, which still burned in the casement. Passing through the sliding panel, she began her researches again—upward this time.

Yes, the earl was right. There was a kind of door which, after considerable difficulty, Maggie succeeded in getting open, and then she beheld the little spiral staircase winding upward into the shades of impenetrable gloom.

She began the ascent without a moment's hesitation, impelled, as before, by something stronger than her own will.

Up, and up, she toiled, as she had toiled downward only a little while before.

The darkness and must and mould were just the same; the bats fluttered about her head, creeping things clung to the dank walls that shut her in.

At last, when her head began to grow dizzy, and her limbs to tremble under her, the little staircase terminated abruptly in a square, small room, from every side of which a window looked out.

Maggie approached one of these, and a cry of terror broke from her lips. The earth seemed miles and miles below her—she was at the pinnacle of the main tower.

The Lookout it was called, and it had been used during the border wars by the Highland chieftains when they desired to reconnoitre the position of an enemy.

For a space of a minute her head reeled dizzily, and she grew ill and faint, but the sweet flute-notes came quivering up from below, and the old border war-song thrilled her like a sudden inspiration.

Who was it? Some friend waiting to save her? She drew near the window, and looked out again, her nerves like steel, her gaze unflinching.

The storm was over, and far above the Scottish peaks the black clouds went rolling off in great ragged masses, and in the clear blue between soared a full moon.

A great owl hooted dully amid the rank ivy that covered one entire side of the ruins; and the lone heath and stagnant lake and ruined portcullis gleamed far below, in the white moonlight, with ghastly distinctness.

Maggie leaned far over the stone window-sill, her large eyes searching for some human figure, for the stirring notes of "The Campbells are coming" still filled the weird midnight silence with melodious echoes.

Could it be some friend who knew of her imprisonment?

The thrilling flute-strings seemed to draw nearer, to sound just below her lofty window, and at last her searching eyes espied a tall figure, a man's figure without doubt, standing just beyond the draw-bridge, in the full light of the soaring moon.

How should she let him know that he was heard? What signal should she make? The grim turret was far too high for speech, and her window, in the shadow of the rank ivy, was very dark.

She turned, gazing round the square tower-room inquiringly, and her eyes fell on her candle, which she had put down in one corner.

The blaze was flickering in the socket, in another moment it would burn out. She uttered a low cry of terror, but at the same instant a happy inspiration flashed across her mind.

She tore the little lace handkerchief from her neck, and, twisting it into a wick, she held one corner to the dying blaze of her candle.

It flared up on the instant, and turning to the window she threw it out; and it went blazing and fluttering downward, like a red meteor, falling and expiring almost at the feet of the solitary figure standing in the moonlight.

(To be continued.)

FIGHTING WITH FATE.

CHAPTER LV.

LORD WALDEMAR and the Hungarian countess, seated side by side in the low basket chaise, drawn by a fat and shaggy pony, drove slowly over the narrow, ill-paved road, bordered with ditches, and with wide stretches of undrained fen.

Both were silent.

The countess was looking straight forward with big, anxious eyes; her face deadly white, and a look upon it of awful suspense and anxiety.

His lordship wondered at her, even while his own soul was tortured with strange hopes and fears, and his own anxieties pressed heavily upon him.

"How pleasant it would be if we were only care free to ride on for ever under the starlit skies of such nights as this," said Lord Waldemar, with unwonted sentimentality. "Yet I must seem almost a grandfather to you, countess. You are a mere girl still. Were you many years married to Count Rothamere?"

"Some twelve years."

"Have you children, countess?"

"My marriage with Count Rothmore was not blessed with children, my lord, but my husband's sons, all older than I, are brothers and sons to me. They all love me, even as I love them."

"If they did not love you, Lady Rothmore, they would be barbarians or worse," cried the baron, gallantly, yet earnestly. "I have known you, but a few short weeks, but I love you as I never expected to love any woman again. You are young enough to be my daughter, but my heart has gone out to you with a tenderness of which I had not deemed myself capable. I can offer you no first love of a passionate young heart. I yielded that to my dear wife who is now in heaven," and he raised his grand eyes reverently. "She is still to me what no other woman can ever be, but I love you with the clinging devotion of my riper years, with a yearning tenderness such as a father might feel for an idolized child. Other men will and do woo you, dear Lady Rothmore, with love, but none with greater love than that I bear you."

"Don't!" she whispered, putting up her hand. "Don't speak to me. You will be sorry, my lord."

"And why? You are not promised to be married?"

"No, on, no. But I shall never marry again."

"You are young to say that. At thirty years of age one does not lay aside all human ties so easily to walk on alone for ever. Dear Lady Rothmore, I am a lonely old man, childless, loveless. Come to me, be my wife. Make sunshine in my lonely house, let me have your smiles and your sunny eyes to greet me when I come home; let me have your noble companionship, the benefit of your bright and sparkling intellect and your keen wisdom. I shall be a greater and a better man for your influence, dear Lady Rothmore, and I will love you with such rare devotion as even Count Rothmore could hardly have felt or shown. Come to me then, I implore you."

"I—I appreciate your kindness, my lord," she said, in a faltering voice, "but it may not be. I can never become your wife. I can never make sunshine in your lonely house. I do not love you as a wife should love her husband. It may not be, dear Lord Waldemar."

The baron stifled a groan.

"I have permitted myself to hope," he murmured. "I have been foolish, idiotic, but I thought you liked me, Lady Rothmore; I fancied you were pleased when I came near."

"I do like you, my lord," said the Hungarian countess, distastefully. "I like you and I admire you. I love to talk with you, to be in your presence, to hear your ringing speeches in Parliament, but I love you as a daughter rather than as a wife. Ah, if Heaven had only been so good as to give me a father like you!"

"I wish you were my daughter," cried Lord Waldemar, with a fierce energy. "Since you will not be my wife I wish you could be my daughter. But I have no son for whom I might beg your hand in marriage. You will go back to Vienna or to Hungary, and forget the foolish old Englishman who loved you; but he can never forget you. I have been made to think that you could love me, dear Lady Rothmore, but I shall never cease to love you. A sort of fidelity has attended me through life, and his tones took a bitter reflection. "My wife died young. My son, a frank, generous youth, proved false and treacherous, and married the daughter of my enemy, my nephew—you know what he is. And now my last hope is shattered. I shall go down to my grave lonely and forsaken."

"My lord, our lives are what we make them. Forgive me, but have you not laid your life waste with your own hand? Your son loved you—he must have loved you—yet you suffered him to die in poverty in a foreign land. My lord, we get what we deserve in this world nearly always. Heaven metes out to us draughts of bitterness sometimes; but, oh! the draughts we mix for ourselves are more bitter still when we fold."

"You do not understand, my lady," cried the lordship, eagerly. "My son married a designing woman—the daughter of a man I hated; and I could not forgive him. You cannot comprehend English prejudices, Lady Rothmore."

"Yet I am English born and bred."

"I believed you to be of foreign birth, although you speak English with such perfect purity. Then you are not Hungarian at all?"

"Only by adoption; but my husband being a Hungarian I am a Hungarian countess."

"You must have left England very early. But, dear Lady Rothmore, all this does not affect the point we were discussing. You are a tender, loving woman, and cannot understand a man's bitter and relentless hatred of his enemy. Do not like you to think me barbarous for my treatment of my son. You may have heard a garbled story, and that may have prejudiced you against me. Men are not like wo-

men. The passions of men are like armed giants, trampling down all softer emotions."

"Ah, do I not know it?" said the countess, softly. "Have I not suffered all my life from one man's hatred?"

"You, countess? Great Heaven, you?"

"Yes, I, my lord," she answered, with a sudden passionate thrill running through her tones, uplifting her pale, sorrowing face. "My life has been blighted. I have wept above a grave wherein my youth and hopes and dearly loved all lie buried. I have mourned as dead for many years one who lived, but for whom I would have died; and all this for one man's hatred of another. Ah, do I not understand the bitterness of a man's hatred when its course has lain upon me all these years, and it is as though it were still?"

"But, dear Lady Rothmore, how can any man have hated one so innocent and lovely as you?"

"The Scriptures say that the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children," my lord, and my father's sins have been visited upon me. My history is very like that of your son's wife. I was a child of seventeen, innocent, thoughtless, loving; a mere child, my lord, in my ignorance of the world. I had a lover, noble, young, generous, and impulsive. He was the son of my father's enemy. But what did Romeo and Juliet care for the feud of the Montagues and Capulets? Could that feud prevent their love for each other? And so I and my young lover, like Romeo and Juliet, clung to each other in a childlike love. My father died suddenly and disgracefully. I was to be turned from my home, and I had nowhere to go. Then my lover with his tender, chivalric devotion begged me to marry him. He said we had better go to his father and kneel at his feet and he would forgive and bless us. My lover had a cousin, a witty, young man, who urged us on to the irretrievable step, promising to secure our forgiveness. We were married. We went to my husband's father, weak, trembling, and full of misgivings, and implored his forgiveness. He—he spurned us from his door!"

A groan of anguish was wrung from the baron. "The night was chill and wet. We went outside, it heartbroken. I clung to my young husband's arm," said the countess, in the same thrilling voice, "and told him that we would make a home somewhere together. But only Heaven! the world seemed against us. We were like two babes in the wood. We went to London, but one little money began to melt. We went to Bristol—"

"Ah-h!"

"But worse chided us. I urged my husband to abandon me, the cause of his misfortune. But from the day of our marriage until the moment he died my arm he was held and steadfast and loving; he had always tender words for me; and when he died his last words were 'My wife, I loved my father, and I love him still. His anger against me has planted thorns even in my dying pillow, but notwithstanding all the anguish, the remorse, the privations, I bless Heaven that you are my wife. Having been so blessed, I can go down to my early grave without a murmur.'"

The quivering voice broke down. The baron uttered a quick, uncontrollable sob.

"Ah, the story must be very like that of your son's young wife," said the countess, after a little. "I was a widow at nineteen, my lord. I buried my husband in a grave far from his native land. My anxieties, my long attendance upon him, and my privations—for I had to starve myself to give him the luxuries he needed—all told upon me. I fell ill, and was taken to a public hospital. For weeks I hovered there between life and death. I was at last removed to the convalescent ward, and another patient was put in my place. By some oversight my name, which had been placed against the number of my bed, was not crossed off and replaced with the name of the new patient. She was friendless in Trieste, and a stranger. She died. Her death was announced under my name, and the gentleman who had employed my husband as tutor to his son, called her to be buried by my husband's side, and unless my name. It was with me that I was discharged from the hospital, and then I crept forth, weak and strangely altered, to find myself unrecognized, my very name taken from me, and myself supposed to be dead."

The baron stared at her now with fiery eyes.

"I had a child—a baby. I found that her name, believing me dead, had started with the child for England, to convey her to her grandfather. I traced the name to Malta. I found a fever-ravaged fever, and discovered that the nurse had been seized with it, and had been driven from the inn where she had taken shelter, the child being driven forth also. I found that an English woman and a little child had both died of fever within a week thereafter in a peasant's house in the outskirts of Valera; and the description of the two corresponded with the description

of my nurse and my child. I believed them dead. I went back to Trieste. I found my husband's employer, and told him that I was childless, homeless, starving. He gave me shelter, and his good wife, for whom I had named my child, found me a situation as governess and companion to Lord Rothmore's daughter. I never came back to England until now, and now I find that my child—I mourned as dead—is living. My lord, by the instinct implanted in every mother's heart, I have recognized my daughter in young Honor Glint. Honor Glint is my child!"

The baron struggled to speak, but a host of conflicting emotions held him dumb.

He gasped for breath. His eyes regarded the countess wildly.

Suddenly she started up, with a ringing shriek, pointing to the westward, where a lurid glow was irradiating the sky, and where forked flames were leaping upward.

"Merciful Heaven!" cried Lord Waldemar, finding his voice. "It is the Cypresses! The Cypresses are on fire!"

CHAPTER XVI.

ON capturing Honor Glint from the cottage of Mrs. Williams and forcibly conveying her to the dog-cart Darrel Moor and Grimrod had made all haste to reach the Cypresses with their young captive.

The manager kept his hand in a brutal pressure upon the girl's mouth, to prevent her possible outcries, and held her down upon the seat in a grip like iron, while Darrel Moor drove as rapidly as possible over the roughly paved road.

The stings of Mrs. Williams soon ceased to be heard.

The drive of five miles was performed in a dead and ominous silence, broken only by the clatter of the horse's hoofs and the roll of the wheels.

The carriage reached the "hatted house," among the firs, approaching it from the road by the paved way, and driving round to the rear door.

Grimrod descended with the girl in his arms, and Moor turned the tired horse into the stable yard, and bounded a vigorous gallop upon the knuckles.

Miss Bing came to the door. "What a night!" said Grimrod, pushing past the woman with his burden, entering the kitchen, where he quipped away.

"Better take her up to her room," said Moor, hoarsely.

"It's all ready for her," said Miss Bing. "This way."

She seized a lighted candle and led the way up to the room Honor had so long occupied.

The girl was released and set upon her feet.

The fastenings of the windows and doors were narrowly examined, and Miss Bing and the two visitors went into the hall, looked the door, and descended to the kitchen, leaving their prisoner in the midst of grief and distress.

"Now give us some supper, quick!" said Moor, dropping himself heavily upon a stool. "We've got work before us."

"Where did you find the girl?" asked Miss Bing, stirring the fire.

"About five miles from here, at the first cottage beyond the farmers' here."

"Have you seen anything of them Londoners?" demanded Miss Bing. "Lord Waldemar and Sir Hugh Tregarth along with the Somersetshire constable?"

"What?" cried Grimrod, in a hoarse yell.

"Lord Waldemar and Sir Hugh Tregarth, sir," said Miss Bing, leaping back in affright. "They came after midnight last night, and asked for Miss Glint, and searched the house, and Sir Hugh came again with a constable till very yesterday."

"Ah!" ejaculated Grimrod. "They are on our track!"

"My uncle is following his investigations in regard to the girl's parentage," said Moor, huskily.

"They have followed me here—they suspect our designs. They mean to rescue the girl."

"They are likely to come back at any moment," said Miss Bing.

The two men looked at each other with appalled faces.

"It's life and death with us," said Grimrod, his Mephistophelean face darkening as with a thunder-cloud, and a sudden glare of lightning shooting from his eyes. "I am reduced to poverty, Moor. All our hope is in Hilda's claims upon Lord Waldemar. If this girl be dead, Lord Waldemar can never prove that she is aught to him. He cannot disprove Hilda's claims; or cast her off."

"If we poison her, they may come before we can bury the body," muttered Moor, starting and listening.

"Yes; there must be no body found if they come. They will be back here at any moment. I almost fancy I can hear them coming. The girl's safe in her room. We must burn down the house with her in it, and escape to London. They must find us there."

on their return. The fire must seem the result of an accident."

They lost no time in deliberation. Miss Bing refused to assist them in their preparations, but made no attempt to change their purpose. They procured some old straw beds, and piled them before Honor's door. They found cans of oil, and one can of inflammable burning fluid, and poured these on the dry wainscoted walls. Then they seized the burning sticks, and took up pans of living coals from the kitchen hearth, and emptied the latter in the straw beds, and with the former they set the walls in a roaring blaze. They fired the furniture, and heaped burning sticks in every room, and fanned the flames carefully, opening the windows to give air to the fire, as soon as they were under way.

The interior of the house was now all ablaze—the flames leaping from the open windows in the front. Sir Hugh Tregaron, the constable, and Mrs. Williams were approaching the house, their horses at a mad gallop. They saw the blaze, comprehended its cause, and turned up to the house from the road at an increasing speed. As they reached the lawn the young baronet sprang out and dashed around the dwelling with the speed and fury of a madman. Meanwhile Moor and Grimrod had returned toward the kitchen, scorched and blackened, looking like two demons, firebrands still in their hands. Miss Bing stood in the rear door, in an attitude of flight, her bundle in her hand.

"I thought I heard the sound of wheels," she said. "They're coming! They're coming!"

She sprang forward, crossed the stable yard, and plunged into the fens.

The two villains were about to rush after her, seeking safety in the same direction, when Sir Hugh Tregaron, in a whirlwind of fury and excitement, dashed around the house and was upon them. Darrel Moor rushed past him and escaped.

Grimrod essayed to dash past also, but Sir Hugh met him with a fierce and determined onslaught, striking him a blow with his naked fist upon the temple that stunned the villain, and caused him to drop heavily upon the ground like a log.

At that moment a wild and piercing scream came from an upper chamber of the burning house—a scream in Honor's voice.

Sir Hugh spurred the senseless body of the messenger with his foot and dashed into the burning hall. He drew down his hat over his eyes, and plunged through the black smoke and blinding flames to the staircase. He remembered the position of Honor's prison chamber, and he knew she must now be there.

The staircase, being of wood, was all ablaze. Sir Hugh mounted it the flames catching his garments, and the steps crumbling under his feet. The balusters fell with a crash before he had reached the top of the steps. The old house had been drying many years, and would have made fine food for fire even without the inflammable oil and fluid.

The upper hall was all afire. The air was hot and burning. Sir Hugh's clothes were burning in spots. His hands were scorched. He gained the door of Honor's room, but a very wall of fire interposed between him and it, and he could not cross it.

Another scream came from the girl's room, and he could hear her running to and fro in her terror, with wild, pitiful moans.

How the fire seemed to whirl and roar and crackle! One might have fancied it a living demon, rolling and sporting.

Sir Hugh dashed in the door of Miss Bing's room. It was burning too. The bed was one red, and flaming mass, and the walls and ceiling were afire. The window was open to feed the blaze.

Sir Hugh staggered to the door leading into Honor's room, and hurried himself against it. It yielded—it gave way.

He leaped into the prison chamber, now full of blinding, suffocating smoke, but he could not see its inmate.

"Honor," he shrieked, sharply. "Come to me—to Hugh! Here I am!"

A wild cry of joy went up out of that flame-shot darkness, and the girl bounded toward him.

He picked her up as if she had been a child. She clasped her arms around his neck.

He bounded with her to the window of Miss Bing's room.

He dashed out the sash with a chafin.

He climbed the window-sill with the girl in his arms.

The fire roared in his ears, his sight was blurred. He trembled and clutched at the window-frame, and a great fiery wall rose up behind him, showing that all escape through the house was cut off.

A shriek from many voices mingled came up from the lawn beneath.

The constable was there with Grimrod, whom he had secured as a prisoner.

Mrs. Williams was there, panic-stricken and weeping.

The Hungarian countess was there, on her knees, her wild, blue eyes uplifted, her face full of horror. Lord Waldemar was there, pale as death and trembling.

"Oh, Heaven!" groaned the old baron. "If they had but a ladder! Must we stand here and see them die?"

Sir Hugh's figure swayed on the window-sill. A long forked tongue of fire shot out at him from the fiery wall behind him.

Gathering all his forces, clapping the girl closer to his brave heart, he gave a leap forward and shot down through space.

He loosened his hold upon Honor as he descended, and she fell apart from him, falling at Lady Rothmere's feet, stunned, frightened, but uninjured.

The countess swooped forward, with a cry that rang far and wide, and caught the girl in her arms. "Mine! mine!" she cried. "My own little Hilda!"

The constable ran to Sir Hugh's assistance. The young baronet gathered himself up, hurt, bruised, but not seriously injured. Mrs. Williams crowded toward Honor, laughing and crying in a breath.

"I have the first right to her," she said, resenting the foreign lady's interference. "I am her old nurse, Margaret Cropley."

The countess looked up, and the lurid glow of the burning house fell on the lovely face.

Mrs. Williams retreated a step in amazement.

"It is my old mistress, Mrs. Wallace Floyd!" she gasped. "The grave has given up the dead."

"Yes, Margaret, it is I," said the countess, softly. Honor looked up bewildered and dazed, recognizing Lady Rothmere.

"Oh, child, child!" gasped Mrs. Williams. "I was Margaret Cropley before I married John Williams; I was your old nurse, and this lady is your own mother."

One look upward into the radiant, tender eyes of the Hungarian countess was enough to convince Honor of the truth of this assertion.

She yielded to her mother's embrace without questioning.

Sir Hugh and Lord Waldemar looked on with tears of sympathy.

Grimrod gnashed his teeth in rage, and struggled with his bonds.

"Oh, this joyful night!" said Mrs. Williams, weeping. "I never looked to see it. I thought my poor little nursing was dead. After they discharged me from the hospital at Marseilles I had not my right mind for a year, and by that time every trace was lost of my poor darling. John Williams, a sailor, brought me home from Marseilles and was my friend, and I married him—a couple of years later; but I have never ceased to mourn for my little Miss Hilda, who I thought had died of the fever at Malta. I never remembered going on any vessel with her, and never knew who took me to Marseilles. But the long sorrow is over—the long joys at hand."

Sir Hugh, all scorched and blackened, looked still bewildered.

"Is the Hungarian countess, Mrs. Wallace Floyd, my lord, and Honor's mother?" he asked.

The old baron answered, by going up to the young girl and taking her in his arms and kissing her, saying: "I recognize you as my grand-daughter, the real Hilda Floyd, Honor. Other proofs may come later, but I recognize you now as my descendant and my heiress, the next in the line of the Waldemar succession, as fully as I shall hereafter. Heaven bless you, my dear child. You have taken my heart by storm!"

He embraced her tenderly and gave her into Tregaron's arms.

Then the grand old lord approached the countess, who stood alone, lovely and rapturous, with blue, ecstatic eyes and a face full of gratitude to Heaven; and said to her, humbly, with tears:

"I have been wicked and revengeful, and I despise myself. Will you forgive me? For the sake of my poor dead son to whom you cling so faithfully, will you forgive me, my daughter?"

"Father!" whispered the countess, in a voice that thrilled him with holy emotions, and a deeper tenderness for her than he had yet known. "Dear father!"

She crept into his arms, and his tears fell on her fair head.

Grimrod had been fighting desperately with his bonds, and had loosened them.

He now sprang up and drew his pistol while he retreated.

The constable leaped upon him. Grimrod fired. The officer knocked up the weapon, and the ball shot into the manager's brain, killing him instantly.

Lord Waldemar, Sir Hugh Tregaron, Lady Roth-

mere, Honor and Mrs. Williams, all returned to Somersham, followed by the constable.

Hours later, while the party were seated in Lady Rothmere's room at the hotel, discussing all these strange mysteries, Honor produced her onyx ball, and the countess gave it into the baron's hands.

He recognized it as an ornament belonging to his wife, and had been given by her to her son. He touched a spring set secretly amid the encircling diamonds, and the onyx ball flew open.

It was hollow, and contained a letter crumpled into the smallest possible space.

This letter had been written by Wallace Floyd upon his death bed, and was addressed to his father. It implored Squire Floyd to forgive him, and to be merciful to his poor young wife and child. It detailed a long course of perjury on the part of Darrel Moor, describing how Moor had urged on the marriage of young Floyd with Janet Arlyn, and how Moor had reported messages from Squire Floyd to the effect that just was not to blame for her father's short-comings, and that her—Squire Floyd—had no dislike to her, and that her—Wallace married to her he would accept her as a daughter.

There were some last sad words of adieu from the son to the father, words so sad that old Lord Waldemar burst into a tempest of sobs and went to his own room, and was seen no more until morning. But from that night he was changed. His harsh, dictatorial manner yielded to a grave gentleness that set well upon his stern visage.

The next day the party returned to London.

They drove to Lord Waldemar's house in Park Lane and found that Darrel Moor had arrived in town before them, and taken away his wife and Mrs. Watchley, as well as a store of money from the baron's desk.

The precious trio were not pursued and escaped to the Continent in safety.

There they wandered about like Ishmaels until their money was all gone.

Darrel Moor died of small-pox in Italy during the next year, and Mrs. Watchley, contracting the disease, also died.

Before her death she made a certified statement of the fraud Grimrod and she had endeavored to practise upon Lord Waldemar, and sent it to his lordship.

Hilda also suffered from the same loathsome disease, but recovered, despite of all her pretenses.

Soured and desperate, poor and fallen from all her high estate, she married a travelling courier, a German, who beats her now and then, and makes her life miserable.

Assuredly her fuscous temper has long ere this been curbed.

The name of Hilda had become distasteful to Lord Waldemar, and Honor never adopted it. On the very day of her arrival in London Captain Glint arrived at the house in Park Lane in a state of mind bordering upon frenzy. He had believed her murdered, having received the letters announcing her strange disappearance. His testimony, added to that of Mrs. Williams, was sufficient to establish Honor's identity beyond all question. Honor tried to abate his just anger against his wife and his wife's daughter, but he would not be appeased.

Having discovered the falseness of Mrs. Glint's nature, he dismissed her and her children from his house, making suitable provision for his wife. She did not need it long; however, dying of fever in the next year. Charlotte was forced to give up her lady ideas, and to appropriate herself to a milliner, in order to procure a support.

Miss Bing was never seen after her escape upon that night of the fire into the fens. It is supposed she must have perished by some accident or fatality, but no one ever sought in the stagnant waters or among the tall rushes for her body. Her brother left England secretly by an early steamer, and went to Canada, where he was killed in a tavern brawl.

Honor was recognized as Lord Waldemar's heiress and successor, and her introduction to society was a marked success.

The Hungarian Countess of Rothmere presides over Lord Waldemar's house; and in his cherished and beloved daughter, he finds rest, peace, and sunshine in her society, and he makes remorseful atonement to her for his long-ago harshness to her and his son. Wallace Floyd's bones repose in the tomb of the Floyds, and are marked by an inscription recording his virtues. The old lord clings to his beloved daughter-in-law all the closer now since last year he gave away his lovely young grand-daughter to be the wife of Sir Hugh Tregaron.

The youthful Lady Tregaron, with her unique beauty, sweetness, and loveliness, is a star at the English court, and a sun in her own home; and has won what so many fought for, that bone of contention—the Waldemar succession.

THE END.



[THE TURN OF FORTUNE.]

MYSIE'S FORTUNE.

IN a cheerless room, low ceiled and scantily furnished, sat an old woman leaning over the fire. She was engaged in making some toast, which operation she performed with extreme care. Every few moments she would turn round and look at the little clock on the table at the side of the room, then glance at a small recess in the opposite corner, in which stood a bed, whereon a girl slept heavily.

"Poor motherless darling," murmured the aged woman, desisting from her occupation, and, placing the plate of toast on the table, she drew the latter up to the fire. It was a dark morning; the rain had been driving all night, and the wind howled mournfully; the ceiling of the room leaked, and on one side the heavy drops fell with a steady "tap, tap, tap," to the floor.

Breakfast was ready—a plain, poor meal enough—and the old dame called her charge, who was hard to rouse.

"Mysie," she cried, at last, louder than before, "wake up, child, it's past four, and here's your breakfast ready. By the time you've eaten it it will be time for you to go."

The sleeper opened her weary eyes and raised herself on her elbow.

"Must I get up now?" she cried, plaintively. "My eyes are heavy, and I'm so tired," and the pretty face, round which the bright looks fell uncombed, looked up languidly. "Indeed, I can't wake up!"

"I thought so," said the old woman. "You said 'Call me at four, Mrs. Marsh, for we must be there by five without fail'; so I have only done as you told me to do."

"Oh, yes, I'd forgotten all about my new place—I'm wide awake now—I'll be ready in a minute," and the words ended in a sigh.

"Well, here's your breakfast—only think—I've made you some nice toast, for it seems to me that

you'll starve if you don't eat more than you have done lately."

"Oh, indeed I can't eat," said the girl, and the delicate lips trembled. "I wish I could; but somehow I've had no appetite lately. I think I'll take some luncheon with me, and perhaps by noon I shall be hungry. It is very kind of you to give me such a nice breakfast, I'm sure."

"There, don't say a word about that, child. I'm sure ever since I saw your poor mother die I've been bound to take what little care I could of you. It isn't much, to be sure; but if I could only see you well that is all I should care for."

"Oh, I shall be well enough soon," said the girl, lightly, smiling as she spoke, and rising wearily from her chair.

Slowly she placed about her shoulders a much-faded woollen shawl, put on a bonnet also much the worse for wear, and ventured out into the cheerless street.

The splendid houses that she passed seemed less imposing through the driving mist. Street after street, corner after corner, Mysie hurried past, goaded by her sad thoughts, for she was young, poor thing, only sixteen, to work so hard for her living.

The market-men were slowly wending their way, sleepy and yawning, and here and there a servant came out of one of the handsome houses, and lounged on the doorsteps.

"They who live here do not toil," said Mysie, sorrowfully. "How strange that life should be so full of joy for some, so brimming with woe for others!"

Little she knew that earthly joys bear no flowers thornless.

On she went till she came to an imposing establishment, where when the shutters were taken down were exposed to view patterns of gorgeous waists and sleeves, brilliant in red and green and yellow, while a wooden figure was set revolving, in order to show off a skirt covered with fine flounces—and bodices, capes, fashion plates, and patterns of rich silks were displayed to every possible advantage.

Passing in by a side door, that had years before been painted green, but had now faded into an uncertain colour of no decided tint, the pale girl mounted three flights of stairs, fearing at every step that she was already too late.

It was yet early, however.

Miss Sharpe, a tall, acid maiden, who ordered as she was ordered, drove as she was driven, met her with a grim smile.

Her shining scissors hung by a long steel chain to her side, a black velvet pincushion appeared conspicuously near her belt-clasp. Her hair was drawn back tightly, ornamented only by a band of narrow red velvet, so near the colour of her hair as to suggest many a glancing smile.

"Come, come, work is all ready. Nancy Withers, what is the matter—toothache, eh? Well, work'll cure it. Jenny Griffin, you're to take the crimson velvet body—Mary Clarke, you the sleeves. Miss Mysie, there's a breadth to embroider in green and red and a white satin band. The clock is striking—come, quick, quick!"

"How sharp she is," giggled one of the girls, a pun she invariably repeated whenever the spinster spoke with energy.

As for Mysie, she sat down to her task with dislike, beautiful as it was.

She liked the work; but stitching for ever, or producing silky flowers on the detested surface from hour to hour, and from day to day, makes the most enthusiastic grow weary and dissatisfied.

One would tire of plum pudding if it were the unvarying every-day fare.

Besides, Mysie's eyes were extremely sensitive; fine work hurt them, and caused headache. Still there was no alternative. Her five shillings must be earned, for even at this low price did she consent to toil if they would only take her.

Perhaps Miss Sharpe or her employer thought that the pleasure of working in such brilliant colour was compensation enough for any trifling trouble to her eyes; perhaps she didn't think anything about it—most likely the latter was the fact, for Miss Sharpe had no soul above her work.

She had been drilled till she had become a perfect machine.

It was the busy season, and the girls were severely taxed—many of them had gone home ill—and others who came were hardly fit to work. Hollow eyes, white lips, and attenuated forms were there in plenty, and, in spite of the wearing labour, trying to look healthy and comparatively happy.

There are light hearts that no toil can break down—there are birds that sing in the snow.

Many of them sat in unnatural positions, telling of the loss of physical strength and constant pain in some vital part of the system; some bent over the fine fabrics with chests that were hollow and consumptive figures, while silks passed through their hands that were to adorn the wealthy, the healthy and, beautiful on the occasion of some splendid festival, and nearly all the girls present had that painful intendment of vision that calls forth sympathy wherever it is seen.

Mysie sat in the midst of a lively group.

"This satin is for Miss Helen Willis, daughter of the rich banker," said one; "she's to marry a millionaire—and they do say he is splendidly handsome. Shouldn't I like to be Miss Willis myself?"

"I should rather be Rachel Rauligh, the Jew's daughter. Her father has heaps of diamonds, and there's no end to the property that's to come to her by-and-bye. Who would you rather be, Mysie Morse?"

"I—I don't know," said Mysie, languidly; "none of those great people, I believe, although it must be delightful to have plenty of money, attention, and all that sort of thing."

"Mysie Morse has such extremely refined and quiet tastes!" sneered one of the employees, who had never liked the gentle girl.

"I know one thing she don't do," said another, in a sharper voice; "she don't pass a certain house every day to see if she can see somebody who smiled at her once—probably in ridicule."

"Silence, Norah Miles!" exclaimed the young girl, whose imprudence was thus pointedly indicated.

"Young women, if you can't talk without quarrelling you had better hold your tongues," said Miss Sharpe, and her steel chain rattled as she spoke.

"I know just what would suit Mysie Morse," murmured a sweet-faced girl, who was laboriously basting—"a nice little home away in the country, where she could go out of mornings and enjoy the scent of clover. We've got a snug little place twenty miles off, and I wonder I ever came here. I get homesick sometimes, thinking of the cows and chickens—but, there, I wanted to earn some money, and at any rate I have got a nice home to go to," she said, smiling to herself, as if in fancy she saw the old red cottage.

"She'd better escape acquaintance with some of the market boys, then," said a new-comer, an awkward, fresh-looking girl. "She'd have fine times

with their slender hands making butter and cheese, milking cows and seeing to dairy-work and cooking. Wouldn't she wish herself back though?"

Mysie put her hand to her side involuntarily. The very mention of sweet country air, clover and all that, made the pain harder to bear.

"Yes," she thought to herself, so eagerly, "I would marry the poorest farmer to-morrow provided I could love him, and leave this miserable, endless sewing and embroidery, gladly, oh! how gladly!"

At that moment some one called Miss Sharpe. She did not return for some minutes, and then she was accompanied by a tall, nobly handsome man with the air and mien of a gentleman, who gazed round him perfectly at his ease.

Of course the young ladies looked their best—smiles and simpers went freely round, and attitudes were improved—while whispers and side-glances were busily interchanged.

The young man seemed to view the scene with a good deal of interest, as he proceeded with his interview with Miss Sharpe, who had laid aside her acid business face for the time.

Mysie, who had once or twice raised her eyes, remarked to herself that she had never seen a finer-looking man, she even noted the wavy curl of his chestnut hair and the glance, combining sweetness and strength, of his large gray eyes. Perhaps she vaguely wondered what he could want of Miss Sharpe. But still she worked steadily on.

Some ten minutes elapsed; the stranger had gone, and the usual dull uniformity went on, broken only by an occasional question, for the girls were all tired.

Scarcely stopping long enough to eat her unpalatable lunch, Mysie Morse toiled on, drawing her needle steadily in and out, selecting this colour and that shade, till all tints and colours seemed to mingle in one uniform shade of gray—till she was almost worn out with weariness.

The girls, however, were not allowed to stop till candle-light—many were required to stay in the evening—the embroidery-workers only till the light faded out.

Mysie had never felt so thoroughly exhausted. Her arms were almost numb as she tied the strings of her old bonnet, her fingers felt as if there were needles in their tips, her head ached, her eyes were dry and tingling. Oh, if she could but have thrown herself upon some kind, motherly bosom to enjoy the luxury of a good cry; but that could never be, however—poor, pale, tired little Mysie was motherless.

Neither father, sister, nor brother had she to help or to love her.

The good creature with whom she lived had once been a servant in her father's house, and though she was very kind her nature was too inherently coarse to allow of her being the companion Mysie needed.

It was not quite dark in the street, but Mysie brushed the tears away and wondered what made her sight so dim. She could scarcely see the face of the old clock over the jeweller's shop door—some way the blood tingled strangely in her temples, and it seemed as if the tumult of bells rang in her ears, though with a far-off sound.

"If I only could reach home," she thought, "before I fall," for her feet seemed to fail her; and clapping her hands over her forehead she overworked girl staggered forward and fainted.

When she recovered she found herself extended upon a lounge in what appeared to be some office; and on moving a little a low, rich voice said, softly: "Ah! I see you feel better."

Looking up, half pleased, half terrified, she was startled to see the tall, stately stranger who had that afternoon held an interview with Miss Sharpe.

"How do you feel now?"

The question was repeated.

"Oh, better, thank you, much better. I am only sorry to have made so much trouble—I never fainted before in my life. I worked too steadily I suppose."

She had lifted herself, and now sat wearily leaning against the lounge.

The colour forced to her cheeks by agitation made her seem wondrously beautiful. Her luxuriant golden tresses had fallen down; she tried to gather them in her trembling fingers, but those weak little ministers refused to obey her will.

"Norris!" called the gentleman, as he saw how powerless she still seemed, and a tall, benevolent-looking old lady came from another room, and, seeing Mysie's situation, gathered the soft masses up quickly and bound them.

"Shall I send in the tea and toast?" she asked.

And before Mysie had time to protest a little table was drawn before her, and tea of olden flavour, richly tinted with cream, stood before her, so different from that she had tried to swallow in the morning.

"My carriage is at the door," said the stranger as she seemed refreshed and quite herself again; "if you will trust yourself with me I will see you safely

home; I shall not let you walk. If I remember faces, I think I saw yours in the establishment where I talked with Miss Sharpe to-day."

Mysie blushed—not with shame that she had been recognized as a sewing girl, but with pleasure, for at this moment the gentleman appeared absolutely like an angel of mercy with his guarding care and pleasant eyes and smile.

Could it be possible that out of all those countenances he remembered hers? Had her white, thin face attractions after all for such as he?

No, no! she was vain, foolish to think so; his eye had been arrested by the bright colours she used, that was all.

Quietly, and with a dignity all her own, she allowed him to lead her to the carriage, and in a few moments they were set down at the very humble tenement where Mysie lived.

"A fair creature," murmured the young man to himself, "is sweet flower blooming in the midst of this wilderness of brick; I must see more of her. I know she must be superior to her circumstances when I first saw her to-day. She has been better off; there's a certain elegance of motion, a repose of manner, that indicate innate refinement. Yes, yes, I must see more of her."

And did little Mysie dream of the stranger?

Whether she did or not a wondrous pleasure bloomed in her heart at the mere thought of him. The next evening, though she had worked as closely at her task as before, she hardly felt weary.

She had a hope now, though she scarcely whispered to herself what that hope was—enough that it strengthened and blessed her.

The next night he came, to the so small wonderment of the good woman who kept the poor place. The old room with its faded carpet, faded rug, faded chairs, faded everything; was a palace brightened up by Mysie's bright, happy face and the presence of the handsome gentleman.

"What a beautiful young man he is, to be sure!" said the good old dame. "I'm sure he's been well learnt; and how splendidly he did talk about the country! I should think he's a born farmer notwithstanding all his high ways. How I'd like to live on a farm of his management! I did dairy work long enough before I was as old as you, Miss Mysie—many's the tired back-ache I've had over the press and the churn; but mercy! why should I go to imagine him being a farmer?"

Mysie thought so too as with a smile on her lips she took her candle to retire.

I will not say what pleasant visions accompanied her to her resting-place; but a certain smile followed her—of that he was sure.

Not long after this, one bright day when the sun shone goldenly in at Miss Sharpe's sewing-room, there was a great commotion among the young sewing girls there assembled.

Mr. Warner, who was known among the operatives as a very wealthy man, called on Miss Sharpe; and Mysie was all blushes when the latter, with a look and manner of sudden respect, came toward her, saying she could leave her work for that day if she wished, as Mr. Warner had called for her, having important news to communicate.

At this Mysie grew pale again; but she quietly arose, and as quietly laid aside her work, promising to return soon.

"I ain't so sure of that," said Miss Sharpe, smiling grimly; "maybe you'll find some other employment that'll suit you better."

Mysie looked up with wondering eyes.

"I don't understand you at all," she said, a little indignantly.

"Perhaps not, just now," was the reply, with another grim smile, and Mysie was obliged to be satisfied.

Not so the girls—they had been speculating and wondering.

"She's not been getting them new things for nothing," said one who felt a spite for the fair girl, though she could not have told why.

"I shouldn't wonder if he's fell in love with her," exclaimed another. "But isn't he splendid? What in the world could he see in that pale little thing?"

Meantime the subject of these remarks walked quietly with her conductor till they stopped before a handsome edifice.

"Miss Morse, this is my mother's home; will you step in with me for a moment?"

She did not hesitate, for a sweet-faced old lady met her at the door, and led her into a beautiful little parlour.

Mysie looked about her wondering—still in the dark.

"Miss Morse," said the young man, seating himself, "I am transacting a little business on behalf of my brother who is at present an invalid. I believe I have some good news for you."

"Good news for me!" she repeated.

"Yes. In our last conversation you were kind enough to tell me something of your former life. Your uncle, in whose family you lived, died some years ago, and in consequence his family threw you

out in the world, though they were not much reduced in circumstances."

"Yes, that is correct," said Mysie.

"You also stated that old Samuel Grosvenor was the only relative you had, if he was still living; that years ago he emigrated to Australia, and you had heard from him but once or twice since."

"I did," said Mysie, suddenly growing pale.

"That Samuel Grosvenor is dead."

Again Mysie gave an inquiring glance.

"And has left to his sister, or sister's child or children—all his fortune."

Mysie drew a long breath.

A great weight seemed suddenly lifted from her heart.

"He has left property to the value of a million," said Mr. Warner, sentimentally.

Mysie grew a little giddy.

She trembled excessively. It could not be for her—this great good news. She sank back quite overcome.

Mr. Warner bent over her.

"You're not going to faint again," he said, smilingly.

"Oh, no!—I don't feel like fainting," she whispered, "only it seems so strange that it should all be left to me—when there are my cousins—"

"Who treated you so shamefully?" he exclaimed.

"Well, we must not return evil for evil, you know," she replied.

"Of course not—but shall you divide with them?" and he laughed a little.

"No, I hope to find many more needy than they—but, oh! are you sure?"

It was very hard to believe that she who for ten years had suffered one long, dreary siege of poverty and dependence—nay, wearisome drudgery—was now to be suddenly as rich as the wealthiest! the thought was overwhelming.

No wonder she asked again, a shade of doubt in her face:

"Are you sure?"

"Very sure, my little friend," he answered, looking down into her sweet face; "and I cannot tell you how glad I am, or how anxious I was to be the first to apprise you of your good fortune. I felt that you who had toiled so nobly, so uncomplainingly, deserved all the good gifts that fortune might shower upon you. Had that uncle whose family have treated you with so much unkindness lived, possibly the money might have reverted to him. Now I have only to add," he continued, in his winning way, as his mother left the room to order refreshments, "that you will quite forget your friends in your new-found honours; perhaps I may include myself when I speak thus."

"Forget you!" cried Mysie, impulsively.

The emphasis was sufficient.

There was no need of the eloquent glance, the smile, the confusion.

She had in that little sentence unconsciously laid bare all the love, all the trust, all the confiding ingenuousness of her innocent heart, but he did not take undue advantage of her candour.

"I am a man of plain tastes," said he, taking one of her hands in his. "My especial hobby is a quiet, retired life in the country, where I can attend to my farm and enjoy the sweet and soothing companionship of nature. When I first called at Miss Sharpe's—first saw your face so calm, so white, among the group of girls—I said to myself, 'That is the face I would never weary of gazing upon'; and then came the wish—but no matter, I forget that I am talking to the gentle embroidress no longer, but to the great heiress, for whose hand the wealthiest and noblest in the land might contend."

Mysie's glance at that was a whole volume of reproof.

"Still I will add," said he, with manly confidence, "that if Mysie Morse were at this moment what she deemed herself this morning I should ask her to be my wife."

"In what am I changed?" she asked, almost mournfully, her eyes swimming in tears.

"In nothing but circumstances," said the young man, gently.

Then came a pause, when, gathering both her hands in his, he said, tremulously:

"Mysie, rich or poor, I love you. Will you be my wife?"

Smiles and tears were in the soft eyes that looked up from his shoulder. His strong clasping arm was around her.

When Mysie returned home to tell the good news to her old friend who had toiled so nobly for her in the days of her poverty she was greeted by the sight of a handsome carriage; and, as she entered, two of her cousins were seated in their gaudy wrappings in the plain room she had long called her home.

"Why, Mysie!" they cried, almost in a breath, as they started forward.

The young girl recoiled a little, remembering their former treatment.

"We've been trying to find you this ever so long," said Adela, the eldest, spreading out her flounces again. "We couldn't think where you had hidden yourself."

"You are very kind," replied Mysis, with all the warmth she could summon up.

"You know we were not to blame in the matter of your leaving us," continued the elder woman, unabashedly. "I've often talked it over."

Was not the wedding a superb one? Chroniclers say that it was. Could it be possible that beautiful creature in garments of lace that seemed to have been wrought by the fairies, and a veil rich enough to have been worn by the Queen of England, had ever worked, pale and dispirited, in Miss Sharpe's room? The bridegroom, too, how nobly handsome, how thoughtful and affectionate he was!

Mysis retired to her husband's splendid estate in the country, and a happy creature she was; not because she was wealthy, but because her husband loved a farmer's life, and she could inhale the sweet fragrance of the clover, hear the singing birds, see running waters and exercise the full graces of her soul in loving what Heaven had made. M. A. D.

GLIMPSES OF SOCIETY.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MR. EVARTS after taking Edward Zane home dismissed Mr. Stoker, for the time, and then with studied politeness he conducted his son-in-law to the best chamber in his house.

"Edward," said he, "I now leave you to rest. In the morning you will breakfast with me, and then we will go and see Anna together. I will have clean linen sent to your room early in the morning. I wish you to be as comfortable as you can, and to look as well as possible in the morning."

"What can the old man mean?" muttered Zane when he found himself alone. "He is too smooth; yes, too smooth altogether—shows too little of the anger. I might expect from the cause given. There is something deep in all this. Like as not he intends to arrange so that I can make no explanation to my wife until he tells her all. That is it. I see through his plan. I'll foil him though. I'll wait till he has had time to get to sleep and then I will slip out, go home, make a confession to suit me and soften her, and all will be right again. I am sorry now; thanks to the fright he gave me. What a spoony Volchini was to give up his girl, thought, to them that had no business with her—weren't even related. I'll have the laugh at him in the club for that."

Zane thus soliloquized, for he did not feel sleepy now.

His excitement was not worn off. He walked about the chamber with a light step, took a cigar from his case, ignited it and smoked until at last he thought he could leave the house without being heard.

Turning down the gas, so as to darken his room, he went to the door and tried to open it noiselessly. He failed to open it at all. It had been locked on the outside.

"Confound it!" he muttered. "A millionaire like me a prisoner in my father-in-law's house? I will not endure it. Ah, the window! I can leave by that and the alley in the rear of the carriage-house."

He went to the window and looked down in the yard, now illuminated by the moon nearly in "the full." He saw there what to a man of his temperament, with nerves unstrung by recent dissipation, was fully as bad, if not worse, than the look on his door.

He saw a large Siberian bloodhound which Mr. Evarts had kept loose in his yard at night ever since an attempt had been made by burglars to enter the house a year before.

Zane knew that the dog was as ferocious as a tiger. He dared not risk escape in that direction. He tried the door again and shook it as if to test the strength of the fastenings.

"Ten thousand fiends!" he cried, angrily. "The door is as solid as a rock."

"Edward, my son, you would do better to pray before retiring than to exhaust yourself in that manner."

These words, spoken in a quiet, firm tone by Mr. Evarts outside, told the young man that even had the door been unlocked he was watched, and without a word of reply he turned and threw himself on the bed.

He did not mean to sleep, but he did, dressed as he was, and as excitement died away, that lethargy which always follows spirituous excitement fell upon him.

It was late—long after sunrise—when he was awakened by a knocking at his door and a summons to breakfast, coming from Mr. Evarts.

He looked at his watch as he sprang to his feet. It had run down for he had forgotten to wind it the

night before; but he knew it was late by the height of the sun.

He hastily washed, looking with alarm upon his sunken and reddened eyes; and the nervous shaking of hands which once had been so steady, that his penmanship was known as the best in the counting-house.

Then he descended to the breakfast-room, deeming it the wisest course to submit to the wish of Mr. Evarts, expressed when the latter unlocked the chamber door.

To his surprise, in addition to his father-in-law, he saw two guests at the table. It seemed singular that they should be there at breakfast. But they were intimate friends of Mr. Evarts—acquaintances of his own, too—one had married his late daughter, the other had taught the Bible-class he had punctually attended before his marriage.

One was the Reverend Mr. Talmage—the other was the genial, the good, the philanthropic young minister, Stephen Merritt.

"We are going to hold a temperance meeting on a small scale for a great purpose by-and-by, Friend Zane," said Stephen Merritt, with a twinkle of pleasure in his eyes, "and we've made an early start for our destination."

Zane hardly knew what he said in reply, but with all his wealth he never felt meaner in all his life than he did then. He kept asking himself:

"Do these true and good men know what I have been doing?"

He would have given half his wealth almost to have sunk down out of their sight.

Yet not by a word or look did they show that they were aware of his derelictions—it was only his guilty conscience which made him think so.

Like the thief who sees a policeman in every man that looks him in the face, so he felt as if those men knew all that he had done.

He could not look them in the eyes while saluting them.

Seated at the table he noticed that the "grace," spoken by the earnest voice of Mr. Talmage, had unusual meaning. The good man not only asked Heaven's blessing on what they were to partake of, but strength from Heaven to resist temptation to partake of that which was not good for body or soul.

Edward Zane had no appetite for food. He could hardly raise his coffee-cup to his lips, his hand trembled so violently. Politeness prevented any open notice being taken of this, but Mr. Evarts and his friends could not avoid seeing it.

If the truth was told, they were probably glad to see it.

Conviction comes most quickly through intensity of suffering. And without conviction there is no repentance. He who is not conscious of having done wrong will never grieve for it.

Breakfast was soon over, and then Mr. Evarts said:

"The carriage is at the door, gentlemen. We will start if you please. Come, Edward, my son, you are in the party."

"Where are you going?" asked Zane, almost bewildered, for he did not know, but an indistinct memory was before him.

"To hold a temperance meeting at your own house, my boy! So, come along."

In a minute more all four were in the carriage.

Talmage and Merritt, seated side by side, discussed earnestly the best means of doing the most good in the various fields before them, but Edward Zane and his father-in-law rode on in silence until the carriage reached the house of the son-in-law.

Here Edward was the first to alight, and, assuming a lighter-hearted manner than he felt, he invited the gentlemen in while he opened the door with his latch-key.

His heart misgave him as he entered the sitting-room, for his young wife was not there, and he feared indeed that a knowledge of all his faithlessness had reached her and that she was gone. How strangely as he had yielded to the siren who led him astray, yet in his heart's depths there was love for her, the idol of his boyish dreams, the hope of his young manhood, the prize that he had struggled for and secured.

"Where is your mistress, Mary?" he asked, uneasily, as the servant came in.

"She will be down in a minute, sir. She was up as a waitin' so long last night!"

Another arrow this to the troubled conscience of the neglectful husband.

But he tried to keep up an air of nonchalance, and, opening the window blinds to let in the cheerful light, asked the gentlemen to be seated.

In a little while Anna came down, very pale, her eyes showing plainly that she had passed a sleepless night.

She saluted her visitors politely and with a grace natural to her, kissed her father tenderly, and then took a seat by the side of her husband, clasping his hot, feverish hand in hers.

"We have come here to hold a temperance meeting, my dear child," said Mr. Evarts to Anna. "I know you will approve of it, especially when you hear that I, who have always believed that a little

wine, now and then, was not injurious, intend to sign a total abstinence pledge!"

"Dearest, best of fathers—it makes me happy to hear you say so, for your example may help those who are in real danger."

"Thank you, my daughter. Our beloved pastor, Mr. Talmage, will open the meeting."

"Let us all kneel in prayer!" said the good man.

They all knelt, husband and wife near the white-haired father-in-law, and the minister breathed out a prayer which made each one feel assured, as he seemed to, that without prayer there is neither hope nor safety.

He asked for help against the powers of darkness, for strength to withstand temptation for a will and a way to choose between evil and good.

It was a prayer to Heaven, and not for the ears of men.

It was supplication in the truest, fullest sense of the word.

The heart of Edward Zane was touched as it never was touched before, and when at the last Anna he rose and saw the dear cheeks of his young wife wet with tears he felt like casting himself at her feet and saying:

"I have sinned, but I will do as no more."

"Brother Merritt has a pledge which he will read and which I am ready to sign," said Mr. Evarts when all rose to their feet.

The noble young champion of temperance rose, and, unfolding a paper, said:

"I have here a pledge of total abstinence from the use of all that can intoxicate, but my friend will pardon me if I talk a little before I offer it for signature. I've got so used to talking for the sons and daughters, for the brothers and sisters, for the fathers and mothers of the land on temperance that I can't get up without making a speech. My heart and body are wedded to temperance work—I expect to live all my life in it, to die in it, and I hope at last to be glorified in it among those saved by its blessed influence."

"Before asking everyone of us first to sign it, for I'll put my name down on every pledge I see, I'll give a few reasons why a pledge should be signed, and say while I am doing it that every man, woman and child should sign a pledge of total abstinence from the use of all kinds of alcoholic drink."

"First, because of all poisons alcohol is the worst. It does not kill instantly and thus end the misery it creates, but it mounts to the brain and produces madness. It blights honour in the noblest natures. It saps virtue in its pure foundation. It takes strength from mind and body. Therefore no one of sound mind, all of well, should use it. Kind nature supplies plenty of stimulants all sufficient in power, which are not poisonous to brain or body. Science demonstrates this every day. It was known before alcohol was known to exist."

"Second: All should sign the pledge, and, signing, keep it—the drunkard to save himself from destruction of soul and body, to give peace to those who tremble for his safety, who, loving him, pray for his salvation; the moderate drinker because he cannot always retain command of himself, and the poison creating in itself an increasing appetite will work on and on until he is immoderate. Every drunkard was once a moderate drinker."

"Those who never drink strong drinks should sign it, not alone for the sake of example, but to give strength for that hour when they may come, they know not when, that hour when temptation opens before them."

"He or she who signs it, asking Heaven's help to keep it, is thrice armed against humanity's greatest foe—against the great cause of crime and misery."

"To sign and keep it will make husbands fond and faithful, wives cheerful and happy, children joyful and light-hearted."

"I will now read the pledge, dear friends, and then lay it down for signature. And I pray to Heaven that not only these but thousands, my millions, may sign and keep the same."

"This is it: I, who hereto voluntarily sign my name, pledge my truth and honour, before Heaven and man, to this effect:

"I will never use as a beverage or a medicine, except in the direst necessity, when life is threatened and a physician deems it necessary, any alcoholic drink—by whatever name it is known—as wine, gin, brandy, rum, whisky, beer, cider, or tonic bitters, containing the ingredients of alcohol. I will not use it, nor will I give it to others to use, or help to place it where it can tempt humanity to fall. God help me to keep this solemn promise."

"There is the pledge, friends—and I shall put my name to it here, as I have done before, and as I hope each one in this room will."

(To be continued.)

On an average, 300 hands have been employed daily for two years on the Vienna Exhibition build-

ing, and only one life has been lost in the course of the operations. The total number of bricks used is over 6,000,000.

FACETIE.

"There's one thing," said a gentleman at a race that nobody can beat, and that is time. "Fudge!" exclaimed a bystander, "every drummer in the land beats time."

HOUSES OF CARDS.—Substantial buildings throughout the country have been wrecked by the winter gales; strange to say we have not observed that paper mills have received any injury. —*Fun.*

AFFIRMATIVE NEGATION.

Giles: "Did your man ever catch wet weather in all his barn days afore?"

Hodge: "Noah." —*Punch.*

PROPHETIC.

Sydney (thinking of the weather): "They say we shall have more water yet!"

Millman (thinking of his milk): "Ah! That you will, my dear!" —*Punch.*

SWORD V. SICKLE.—Objections have been raised to the employment of soldiers by farmers in harvesting operations; may the day be distant when our red-jackets will have a harvest of their own? —*Fun.*

"You should live within your income, sir," said a harsh old capitalist to a clerk who asked for an advance of wages. "It's easy enough to live within an income," modestly replied the clerk, "but what I should like to know is how a fellow is to live without one."

SLY REYNARD.

Agreeable Brother: "I say, Polly, why is a girl doing her hair like a fox?"

Mild Sister: "Because—because—oh, I don't know! give it up!"

A. B.: "Because she has a brush and pads." —*Fun.*

"You are the dullest boy I ever saw," crossly exclaimed a bald-headed uncle to his nephew. "Well, uncle," replied the youth, with a glance at the old gentleman's bald head, "you can't expect me to understand things as quickly as you do, because you don't have the trouble of 'getting 'em through your hair.'"

A CHERGYMAN in a strange parish, wishing to know what the people thought of his preaching, "interviewed" the sexton and asked him what the people said of Mr. Jones, his predecessor. "Oh," replied the sexton, "they say he isn't sound." "Well, what do they say of the new minister?" "Oh, they say he's all sound."

SILENCE IN THE COURT.—Outside "barbarians" may smile at a curious feature in the wedding procession on the occasion of the marriage of the Emperor of China. "The band in scarlet, silent!" Would that this evidence of royal taste might strike the key-note—pardon the Hibernicism—to silence our execrating street musicians. —*Fun.*

VANITY WITHOUT VEKATION.

Belinda: "Lady Jones is here to wish us the compliments of the season; will you see her to receive them?"

Beatrice: "No, thanks, B." I prefer receiving compliments from gentlemen; and before the season is over I shall be certain to receive far more than I care for. —*Fun.*

"BAYLED SCIENCE SLOW RETIRES."

Scene—Conversations of the Thersiburgs at Tail-ological Society.

Dr. Fossil: "You observe, like the oscalcite, there is a projection here of the—"

Lady Latenser (eager with demonstration): "That shows we cannot have been monkeys, Dr. Fossil; because in real people that part is the funny bone!"

Military Escort (with evidently clear view of the theory): "Very true, I think it's absurd; you know, to imagine that that—aw—fellah could ever have been a man—arm is much too long to hold a gun properly; proves it beyond a doubt—aw!"

[Exit Dr. Fossil, a sadder if not a wiser man.] —*Punch.*

THE SUN.—I hope you are quite well, as this does not leave me at present. Fact is, I am under repair. But what a set of little idiots you are! You go splashing about into unlucky atmospheres, get yourselves as wet as you can, and then abuse me, because, in drying you, I make clouds come up, and you can't see me. I'm all here, my dear little Earth, so don't frighten yourself. Don't believe a word that chap Figuer says about your folks coming here some day. I wouldn't have you at any price; and he's an idiot. I hear that little idiot of a moon of yours is giving herself airs. If you were worth a ray, some of you would find your way to her, and teach her manners. Dr. Croly told you that it could be done easily, if you only knew how. But that's your look-out. Mind, I intend to dry you tho-

roughly, and until that's done you'll see very little of me. However, you can go on bellowing, if it amuses you; but after all these years you might know better. —*Punch.*

THE MOON.—We send you the proper greeting; but there is no very good feeling towards you. You have dragged us with you into horrible atmospheres, and we have hardly had a glimpse of the sun for a month. You are always bothering over reforms; can you not agitate for a repeal of the union between you and us, and then we should glide away, like one of your balloons, into more pleasant regions? We noticed your gas-strike, and pitied you. The last scenes in *Babt and Blyss* are exceedingly like the scenery in the moon, but your ladies have two eyes, which is ridiculous. We have, however, no such splendid beings as Amazon-Queen Helen Barry. —*Punch.*

A CHESTNUTING TOGETHER.

That dim old woods were strewn and brown,
The merry songsters gone,
And purpling mist rose cold and chill;
Where summer rills had run;
But what cared I for barren fields,
Or any autumn weather,
When, hand in hand, sweet Nell and I
Went chestnutting together?

I shook the trees; from loaded boughs
The nuts came rattling fast;
She gazed and well, and all too soon
The happy hours flew past;
"How glorious it would be," thought I,
"Through fair or cloudy weather,
If Nell and I could always go
A chestnutting together."

I oped the prickling burrs, to shield
Her tender hands, and said,
"Tis ever thus; the thorns and burrs
With flowers and fruits are wed;
You'll need a strong and willing hand
For life's tempestuous weather;
To guard as now, when you and I
Go chestnutting together."

It's twenty years ago to-day
Since hand in hand we stood,
And plighted there our troth beneath
The old love-lighted wood;
And now a maiden just as sweet,
In just such hazy weather,
My Nellie's child, and neighbour Will's
Are chestnutting together!

They stand to-day where we stood then,
At the fording of life's stream;
For them th' entrancing hours pass by;
In th' same delicious dream;
For love will live while time shall keep,
Its fair and cloudy weather,
And youth and maidens long will go
A chestnutting together. —*A. R.*

GEMS.

"Money may be the root of all evil, but little good can be effected without its aid."

We are not called upon to exercise judgment so much as mercy and love.

The truly great have never been destitute of some proper sense of religion.

IMMODERATE care is a spiritual canker that doth waste and dispirit.

ILL news is swallow-winged, but what is good walks on crutches.

KEEP your store of smiles, and your kindest thoughts for home. Give to the world only those which are to spare.

Men want restraining as well as propelling power.

The good ship is provided with anchors as well as sails.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

APPLE JAM.—Pare, core, and chop good sour apples; take the same quantity of sugar and make a syrup of it; add the apples, the juice and grated rinds of two or more lemons; and a few pieces of white ginger. Boil it till the apple looks clear and yellow. It will keep five years.

SCOUR IN THE HEAD.—Into a pint of water drop a lump of fresh quicklime the size of a walnut; let it stand all night, then pour the water off clear from sediment or deposit, add a quarter of a pint of the best vinegar, and wash the head with the mixture. It is perfectly harmless. Only wet the roots of the hair.

BAKED CHICKEN PIE.—Clean and cut up your

chickens and put them in a pot to stew, covering them with water. Put butter—large spoonful to two chickens—in it, with salt and pepper. While it is stewing make a rich puff paste with lard and flour, roll out a piece and line a baking-pan, stir a table-spoonful of flour with water and stir it in the chicken, then pour it all in the pan with the paste in it. Roll out a piece of dough for the top and batter it, sprinkle flour over it, and roll again—do this twice; then put it on the pan, and put pieces of dough twisted across the top and in rings between; stick it well in the centre with a fork, press the edges with the fork, and bake it slowly.

STATISTICS.

COUNTY COURT STATISTICS.—There are 510 county court circuits in England and Wales, and courts are held in 521 different places. At 351 the court is monthly, and at 140 the court is held once in two months. The number of plaintiffs entered in all these courts in the year 1871 was 911,538, as against 212,293 in 1870, while 612 cases were sent from the superior courts, as against 597 in 1870. The number of cases determined was 521,944 in 1871 and 525,340 in 1870. Judgment summonses were issued to the number of 133,923; and 66,606 were heard. 35,704 warrants of commitment were issued, and 7,969 debtors imprisoned. In 1870 the debtors imprisoned numbered 6,597. In 1871 there were 181,123 executions against goods, and 4,435 sales made. The total amount for which plaintiffs were entered was 2,662,132*l.*, and the amount for which judgment was obtained by plaintiffs was 1,824,156*l.* for debt and 61,670*l.* for costs. The amount of fees on all proceedings was 353,031*l.*, being 6,914*l.* more than in 1870. From all the foregoing it would appear that the business of the county courts continues to increase, while that of the three superior courts of common law is on the decrease.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE FIRST PROTESTANT CHURCH IN ROME.—Work has been commenced on Trinity Church, the first Protestant Church ever built within the walls of the city of Rome. It is intended for the sole use of English residents and visitors.

VISIT TO EUROPE OF THE SHAH OF PERSIA.—The Shah of Persia has decided to take with him to Europe three princes of the blood royal, three ministers of the first class, seven of the second, and about 30 attendants.

THE STANLEY LECTURES IN AMERICA.—Mr. Stanley, the discoverer of Livingstone, was, it will be remembered, offered 10,000*l.* by an enterprising Yankee to deliver lectures in the United States. These lectures have been already stopped, the attendances being so scanty that the expenses have not been met.

THE ARMOUR FOR "PETER THE GREAT."—The Russian Government, after unheard-of exertions, has abandoned its attempt to make the armour necessary for the big ship, "Peter the Great," which was to sweep the English fleet from the sea some day or other. The work has been handed over to an English firm.

A STEAMER FOR "PETER THE GREAT."—The Indian troopship, "Jumna," has arrived at Spithead, bringing the 20th Hussars—a corps which has never before been in England—the headquarters and four batteries of the D-Brigade, Royal Artillery; a few time-expired men, and eleven lunatics. The 20th Hussars go to Colchester, the head-quarters, and three batteries of artillery to Woolwich, and one battery to Exeter.

QUEEN ANNE'S CHAIR.—The bathroom at Melbury House, when H.R.H. Prince Arthur was present, contained a very interesting and ancient piece of furniture known as "Queen Anne's chair." This is a large square chair, beautifully carved, and wholly gilt. It is also adorned with rich gold lace and fringe. At each corner is a carved figure of a cherub, and the seat is supported by human figures with grotesque heads of animals. Altogether it is a very handsome piece of workmanship. It was used by Queen Anne when Her Majesty once visited Melbury on her way back from Cornwall.

THE KULOMET.—A Russian inventor has produced a new weapon—the kulomet, or hand mitrailleuse. It is of simple construction, and may be used by the soldier on any ground, however hilly, just like a rifle. It is comparatively cheaper and simpler than the breechloaders used by European armies, and a soldier armed with it can, under all circumstances, fire three as rapidly as with the needle-gun; in battle it will fire twenty-four shots a minute, while other breechloaders only fire from twelve to thirteen a minute. Any rifle may be converted into a kulomet, and any cartridge may be used with it.

CONTENTS.

Page	Page
MAURICE DURANT ... 265	MISCELLANEOUS ... 287
CHRISTMAS IN HOME ... 268	
THE SISTER'S FLA ... 264	
SCIENCE ... 268	
LEON IN MISSOURI ... 268	
THE SECRET OF ... 269	
SCHWABENBURG ... 269	
THE FORTUNES OF ... 272	
BRANLETHORPE ... 272	
ELIQA : OR, THE ... 274	
GIPSY'S CURSE ... 274	
RED HELM ... 277	
LORD DAN'S ERROR ... 279	
WARNED BY THE FLA ... 281	
FIGHTING WITH FATE ... 281	
MYRIN'S FORTUNE ... 284	
GLIMPSE OF SOCIETY ... 286	
FACTILE ... 287	
GENES ... 287	
HOUSEHOLD TREASURES ... 287	
STATISTICS ... 287	

* A MONTH AGO, words by Chas. Garvie, Esq., music by Luigi Zampa (Fettis, New Oxford Street). This graceful little song contains some good versification welded to a pretty air and simple accompaniment.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

WILLIAM W.—It is certainly obtainable.
AURELIA.—1. The colour of the hair is dark-brown. 2. Handwriting very good.

A. B. C.—Two guineas in the first instance, in the second one guinea.

A POOR MAN.—You can take out a pedlar's certificate for one year for five shillings.

HARRY.—Your handwriting lacks freedom, which you should endeavour to acquire by practice, but the letters are well formed nevertheless.

MINNIE.—1. On Tuesday. 2. Hardly up to the proper standard. It is perfectly possible to improve the handwriting, a good model for imitation and perseverance and practice being the entire conditions of success.

C. H. G.—The gross revenue of the Post Office for 1871 was 4,880,000l. the net revenue 1,269,000l. Besides this correspondence on account of public offices amounting in weight to 12,793,480 ounces, and in postal value to 135,546l., was carried by the Post Office.

SOLOMON.—The words would be pronounced nearly thus:—Gheyber, with the initial consonant hard; Helene is in popular pronunciation made a word of two syllables, though, in reality, it is a word of three—Hel-lo-ne; the other word is pronounced as if spelt Ung-went. The word Ukase denotes in Russia a proclamation or imperial order published, having the force of law. It, therefore, nearly resembles our familiar word, edict.

J. S. B.—Chalk is we believe one of the principal ingredients. Milk is also largely adulterated with water, and is then coloured with annatto. Some curious and hardly agreeable statistics as to the adulteration in London of this primal article of diet have been published. By this investigation and analysis it appeared, however, that nothing much more harmful than water was commonly employed—what the adulterators, with a cruel consciousness, playfully designated "Simpon."

T. G.—Coal was discovered near Newcastle in 1234, and first dug at that place under a charter granted the year by Henry III. It was first used about 1250. Dyers, brewers, etc., began to consume it extensively in 1350. In consequence of an application from the nobility and gentry, Edward I., in 1398, published a proclamation against it as a public nuisance. It was imported from Newcastle to London in 1350, and was in general use in the metropolis in 1400.

F. S. G. J.—I. We cannot confidently recommend any one Manual or Mesmerism. There are, however, many medical mesmerists resident in town. There is much curious information on the subject in Colquhoun's "Leis Revelata"—a book, we think, out of print, but to be met with occasionally in libraries and on our bookstalls. 2. There is a treatise on Phrenology by Dr. Fowler, an American gentleman—concerning which one of the larger booksellers would probably give you every information.

COPYRIGHT.—We must decline your verses. The idea is not destitute of merit; but the mechanical versification is seriously defective. Connaught and sought are not permissible rhymes, it being necessary to rhyme the accented syllables—a prime principle in English poetry. Freedom and serfdom, moreover, do not rhyme, and a purist would certainly object to dust and lost, as also to hand and lamb. A little more careful study would be requisite in order to render "Connaught" really a poem.

L. J. C.—The use of gum would certainly be desirable, but why not for the purpose you mention use the ordinary water colours? If you want a good and enduring ink the following (designed especially for zinc garden labels) will meet your wants:—Verdigris 1oz.; sal ammoniac 1oz.; lamp black 1oz.; water half a pint. Mix in an earthenware jar, without using a metal spatula. To be shaken before use, and used with a clean quill pen.

RESUME.—Manifestly a matter for the exercise of personal discretion. In etiquette of course he had no right to nod. In fact we may go considerably beyond this, and correct a very prevalent error. In all cases the recognition is to come from the lady; in other words, the lady bows to the gentleman first, not the gentleman to the lady. Without an introduction, at all events, a recognition on either side would be totally against all ordinary social usage. But possibly affairs of the heart justify some deviation from the rigid rule; and love before this has tripped over all kinds of cold ceremonial observances.

E. P.—Your lines called "Pretty Polly" are very

ardent, and Polly, if pretty and a real person, ought to be highly gratified. They are, however, hardly up to the requisite standard. For instance, no person however lovely, can fill a man with joy divine. The joy, as being experienced by a man, would most certainly be human. To call any lady a treasure is too hackneyed for a present poet's purpose; the expression is worn out. "Separated" and "elevated" are words that do not rhyme. The "curled cause" referred to is rather strong language. Blame and mine again don't rhyme. Frequently too there are too many syllables in a line—a grave defect manifestly. When you say to Polly "You must put up with your lot and it bears, and love the man you hate," you express an absolute impossibility, such as no poetic licence can permit. We cannot love those whom we hate. The last verse seems to be rather affecting, but we think we have given one or two passing reasons why we are unable to publish the amatory verses.

POST.—By alliteration is understood a certain concurrence of sounds; ordinarily one or more sequent words beginning with the same letter. This was the prevailing mechanical element in the Anglo-Saxon poetry, such for example as that written by Caedmon, the Monk of Whitby. The great modern master of the art, apart of course from his otherwise vast genius, is Mr. A. C. Swinburne; but there is a very valid reason why all true poets should be more or less suggested in alliteration. It is that the repetition of the same sound produces melody, and where the liquid letters, l, m, n, v, are concerned a most agreeable melody results. Here is a specimen from Gray

"Woods that wave o'er Delphi's steep,
Isles that crown the Ægean deep,
Fields that cool Lissus' waves
Or where Meander's amber waves
In lingering labyrinth creep."

Here these lines if delicately read produce a fine vocal effect. There is the repetition of sound, or alliteration, in "Meander" and "amber" and of the initial letter in "lingering" and "labyrinth." The splendid poem of "Dorcas" by our greatest living poet supplies moreover many instances, some of them even superior to the one cited from the accomplished Gray.

RETRIBUTION.

Nay I why should we talk of the past,
'Tis useless to do so, I trow!
The jest was bitter as Abbott's fast—
But what does it reck to us now?
You would me as most men do woo!
And I listened and loved you then!
'Tis pastime for you, with naught else to do,
Most charmingly idle of men!

I was a simple young maiden
Who carried her heart on her sleeve;
With pure faith and tenderness laden,
And glad in your love to believe.
The strength of my memory to prove
You gave me a lesson to learn;
You taught me to conjugate "love"
In every conceivable turn.

Before I that lesson had learned,
I had given you all my heart;
A heart that you carelessly spurned,
And laughed at the giver! Don't start!
I've forgiven you long ago
For the grief that you caused me then;
It made me a "simple woman,"
And proved you the "wisest of men!"

You taught me most heartlessly to be—
To do unto all things professionally true;
Your "pastime" was to deceive me—
My pleasure is now to cheat you!
So whisper no more vows of love!
Nor will we talk more of the past;
For your foolish flirtations you've won
Love's retributive justice at last! N. M.

JAMES, nineteen, tall, dark, loving, and domesticated. Respondent must be tall, dark complexion, and of a loving disposition.

JOE B., a seaman, twenty-two, 5ft. 4in., wishes to correspond with a young lady about twenty-two, medium height, loving disposition, and fond of home.

JANE V., twenty-seven, would like to correspond with a young lady about nineteen, tall, fair, good tempered, and agreeable.

ALICE, eighteen, brown hair and eyes, rather stout, and of a loving disposition. Respondent must be dark, of a loving disposition, and about her own age.

HARRIE, nineteen, fair, and rather pretty, would like to meet with a gentleman in a good position; and about twenty-eight.

BILLY, twenty-one, 5ft. 9in., light complexion, handsome, and loving. Respondent must be about his own age, well educated, and loving.

HARRERT, twenty-three, tall, fair complexion, and in the Army. Respondent must be about nineteen, loving, musical.

SAM, twenty-one, tall, and dark, would like to correspond with a tall young lady of a loving nature, and about his own age; a governess preferred.

JANE W., twenty-seven, tall, and handsome, would like to become acquainted with a young lady who could keep a home comfortable.

ANGELINA, twenty-three, tall, fair, good looking, and of an affectionate disposition. Respondent must be tall, and fond of home.

HAPPY WILLIE, twenty-two, 5ft. 8in., dark complexion, blue eyes, dark hair, considered handsome, and fond of home.

SARRO, twenty-six, medium height, fair, good looking, and fond of home. Respondent must be about twenty-three, and fond of children.

RECHARD M., twenty-seven, 5ft. 9in., handsome, light-brown hair, and in the Navy. Respondent must be about eighteen, good looking, accomplished, domesticated, and able to keep a home clean.

JACK, twenty-three, tall, handsome, and a seaman in the Royal Navy. Respondent must be about twenty-four,

good tempered, dark complexion, fond of home, and of a respectable family.
HARRY, twenty-three, tall, dark hair, dark-brown eyes, and of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a tall, dark gentleman, must be of a loving disposition, fond of home and children.

THOMAS J., twenty-nine, tall, dark complexion, good looking, and in the Royal Navy. Respondent must be about twenty-seven, medium height, light complexion, and of a loving disposition.

BETTY, twenty-one, tall, dark, and would make a loving and affectionate wife. Respondent must be tall, dark, loving, affectionate, fond of home, and about twenty-seven.

ESS, twenty-three, tall, brown hair, handsome, and of an affectionate disposition, wishes to correspond with a young lady who is pretty, loving, domesticated, and affectionate.

CLARA F., nineteen, tall, fair, brown hair and eyes, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty-three, tall, fair, loving, and affectionate; a mechanic preferred.

LOUIS LAURA, eighteen, tall, fair, light-brown hair, large blue eyes, considered handsome, and a good pianist, wishes to correspond with a gentleman about twenty-six, tall, fair, and handsome; a clerk preferred.

ERNESTINE, twenty-six, and rather petite, wishes to correspond with a gentleman about thirty or forty years of age. "Ernestine" is a very good pianist, and has money in her own right.

BETWICHING LITTLE ADELLE, seventeen, petite, with light-brown hair, dark eyes, can play and sing well, and speak French. Respondent must be about twenty-one or twenty-two, tall, dark, loving, and agreeable; a foreigner preferred, but not a German.

GIRAZ, twenty, a good-tempered and agreeable girl, pretty, well educated, and fond of amusement, would like to correspond with a manly fellow not much older than herself, who is seeking a pleasant and affectionate wife.

CLARA LOUISE, nineteen, tall, dark hair and eyes, not bad looking, can play the piano-forte and sing, wishes to marry a gentleman about twenty-eight, in a good position, honourable, well educated, tall, and moderately good looking.

F. MAC, twenty-eight (engineer in the merchant service), medium height, dark-brown hair, and in a very good position, wishes to meet with a young lady about twenty-five, dark, good looking, medium height, domesticated, and respectfully connected; a tradesman's daughter preferred.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED.

TRUE AND TRIED is responded to by—"Margaret R." nineteen, tall, dark, affectionate disposition, intelligent, and very well educated.

MINNIE L. by—"P. P. O." C. T. by—"S. C." 5ft., rather slight, brown hair, hazel eyes, and a good cook.

ROBERTO by—"Alfred S." twenty-three, dark, good looking, and in a good position of life.

LIVELY BILL by—"Nellie," of a happy, loving disposition.

E. H. S. by—"Maud F." twenty-five, tall, dark, able to keep his home nice and clean, and of a loving disposition.

CONSTANT READER by—"Nellie," twenty-four, fair complexion, not tall, a lady's maid, and would make a loving wife.

ERNEST by—"Pattee," twenty-three, tall, fair, considered good looking, would make a loving, industrious wife, and is a domestic servant.

WALTER by—"A. W." nineteen, medium height, brown hair and eyes, used to business, and very fond of home.

RICHARD by—"Jessie," a servant, eighteen, thoroughly domesticated, loving, fond of home and children, and an orphan.

NEW ZEALAND by—"Mary," thirty-nine, tall, fair, gray eyes, brown hair, thoroughly domesticated, loving, and fond of home.

MABEL by—"Solidity," twenty-eight, 5ft. 10in., in a very respectable position, 100% a year, affectionate, and domesticated.

MAURICE D. by—"Mabel," twenty-three, 5ft. 2in., dark, loving, domesticated, and able to keep a home comfortably.

JACK T. by—"Wild Rose," twenty-four, medium height, dark hair and eyes, good looking, affectionate, and fond of home.

CAROLINE by—"Ready-as-ready," twenty-two, medium height, dark-brown hair and eyes, a petty officer in the Navy, and would make a loving husband.

THOMAS by—"Emma," seventeen, inclined to be dark, rather pretty, fond of home and children, and thinks she is all that "Thomas" requires.

EDWIN by—"John Geo. E." twenty-one, tall, dark, and good looking, in a position of trust in a merchant's office, at a salary of 150l. per annum, with a yearly increase of 20l. until it attains 250l.

EVERYBODY'S JOURNAL, Parts 1 to 4, Price Threepence each.

THE LONDON READER, Post-free, Three-halfpence Weekly; Quarterly One Shilling and Eightpence.

Now Ready, Vol. XIX. of THE LONDON READER, Price 6d.

Also, the TITLE and INDEX to Vol. XIX. Price One Penny.

NOTICE.—Part 116, for JANUARY, Now Ready, price 6d.

N.B.—CORRESPONDENTS MUST ADDRESS THEIR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR OF "THE LONDON READER," 33, Strand, W.C.

†† We cannot undertake to return Rejected Manuscripts. As they are sent to us voluntarily, authors should retain copies.

London: Published for the Proprietor, at 33, Strand, by G. A. SMITH.